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JACK RALSTON

INSCRIPTION

TO ONE

"In mind and form alike by Nature beautifully wrought—fair,
just, and gentle."

THE AUTHOR.

The author wishes also to acknowledge the kindness of Mr. David Boyle, and the value of the Provincial Museum at Toronto, of which Mr. Boyle is the Governmental Superintendent. The museum contains a wide range of most interesting and valuable relics and records of the past in North America.

H. B.

Alfred Knowles
5 Reille St
Cote St Paul



"Jack raised his rifle and fired."

Page 131.

JACK RALSTON



J Nelson and Sons



THEY WERE THE FIRST AND LAST

JACK RALSTON



THE INDIAN CAMP.

Page 181.

J Nelson and Sons



Jack Ralston

OF

THE OUTBREAK OF THE NAUSCOPEES

*A Tale of Life in the far North-East
of Canada*

By

HAMPDEN BURNHAM, M.A.

*Author of "Canadians in the Imperial Service,"
&c., &c.*



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JACK RALSTON.

Chapter I.

THE FROZEN NORTH.

NOTHING arouses the curiosity and interest of a man, especially if he be a young man, like travels and adventures. They appeal strongly to the imagination, and kindle in the youthful breast the fire of excitement and ambition. What can excel in daring the journey of Andrée and his companions in their balloon into the unknown regions of the polar world? Almost all journeys in arctic regions, where fierce storms and death-dealing blasts are so likely to end the earthly career of even the best-prepared of travellers, are fraught with equal interest. The lonely vastness of these illimitable regions; the magnificence of nature in her awful wildness; the glory of the aurora, which cannot even be described to the readers of low latitudes; the sparseness of the population, made up of little communities that barely hold their own with the forces of nature; the size and fierceness of the wild animals that roam over the mighty

wastes ; the denizens of the sea, that in North-Eastern Canada form such a large portion of the quarry of the inhabitants, who are, without exception, fishers and hunters—all give to the portion of the western hemisphere under the Arctic Circle a romantic interest that is exceeded in no other part of the known world. This region, lying to one side of the route taken by the occasional polar expeditions, partakes largely of the importance, in the eyes of great travellers, of the polar regions themselves ; and yet, notwithstanding the establishment there of a few Hudson Bay Company posts and the annual arrival of a mail and packet boat, so little is known of these regions that no exploration of them worth mentioning was made before 1893, and every fresh tale of travel and adventure in these vast, inhospitable, and unknown wilds is awaited with interest. Unknown regions awaken their chief interest in us from the fact that we people them in our fancy with all the usual elements of human life and strife, and from these is derived the intense sympathy and sense of kinship that causes the eye to glisten and the heart to beat more quickly when we hear and read of them. Suffering and privation stare the majority of human beings in the face, and they well know how to feel for those whose lot is cast in these more remote and inaccessible regions of the earth. In the tropics of Africa we are confronted with an entirely different set of conditions. There food is plentiful and raiment is not needed. Nature is comparatively kind, and it has remained for the natives themselves to make the natural conditions con-

ducive to a happy or to an unhappy life. Not so in the far north, where the strife of men is carried on amidst a greater strife of the elements, and thus the picture of life and death in the sub-arctic regions is more awful if less ornate, and more picturesque and striking if less human and minutely entertaining. The physical features of the two regions—the huge icebergs, the mighty rivers, the vast stretches of wilderness in the one; and the endless forests, stretches of arid waste, and fertile soil, with intense heat as opposed to intense cold, of the other—are no less noticeable than the fauna which inhabit those regions. In the south we have the elephant, the lion, and the buffalo, with the rhinoceros and herds of smaller and more serviceable animals; whilst in the north the whale, the salmon, the sea-lion, the polar bear, and other curious monsters of the sea take the place of the land animals of the south. In the north there also dwell the stately caribou, the reindeer, the musk-ox, the silver fox, the red deer, and vast numbers of those sleuthhounds of the forest—the wolves—besides multitudes of small game.

For the feathered hordes of the southern forest there are as substitutes in the north, in season, besides the sea-gulls and eagles of the coast and the snow-birds of the interior, geese in tremendous numbers, snipe and duck of every known variety—all usually in fine condition, having recently come from the feeding-grounds of the south. To the bold and daring man, who fears neither nature nor the hostile native, and who glories in his physical strength and fortitude, the north presents a

weird and uncontrollable fascination which no other part of the earth affords. The midnight sun is more weird, though less fierce, than the sun of the southern midday, and the glories of the star-lit arctic night seem to usher us into the very presence of God Himself. Man, too, is naturally free from disease here. The pestilent jungles of the south are the broad reaches of pure air in the north. It requires, however, a perfect physical organization to enable men to live up to the tonic conditions of this northern life, since, though the air is so clear and pure, it is too strong for other than strong men. Excepting the few posts of the great Hudson Bay Company, there are no centres of white population, and even these never contain a white population of more than ten or twelve souls.

The Eskimos, though not as numerous as is usually supposed, are scattered over a large area. Their peculiar life and habits have given them a world-wide reputation. That they are of remote Mongolian origin—remote both in time and place—is generally acknowledged. The Indians of the Labrador region originally came from the banks of the mighty St. Lawrence—forced back by the wars of the Iroquois, and by the advent there, in later times, of the European—and from Hudson Bay. They retain the appearance and customs of the ancient tribes of the west and south, from which they sprang. It may reasonably appear singular to the reader that the Indians and Eskimos, between whom exists a bitter hatred, should not have either increased in number or by this time

have died out altogether. Strange to say, however, the balance has been evenly maintained for ages, and there are no signs of decay either in physique or numbers. Conditions of white and native life so simple as these furnish the best material for a study of the various types of human temperament and disposition, unclouded as they are by the affectation and conventionality of more civilized peoples, in whom love and hate are more a matter of calculation than an unstudied revelation of character. It is because of this affectation and present-day superficiality that it has more than once been observed that the conditions of life necessary to poetic inspiration are fast receding from the scene. The heroic qualities of the heroes of Troy and of the crusaders are found now in the outskirts of civilization only. Savage as the natives are, according to our manner of describing them, they are by no means so if we make a fair comparison of their ways with ours. Their wars are the hand-to-hand conflicts of individuals, whilst ours are national and regimental. The repeating rifle is more destructive than the bow, and the bayonet than the spear and stone hatchet. It is true that the savage mind is more easily excited and prompted to war by false ideas of honour, pride, and revenge; but it cannot be said that this is to their discredit, for some sense of honour, though absurd and fantastic, is better than none at all, and a thirst for revenge, though the outcome of the devil's nature in man or a desire for rude and ready justice, is better than calm, cold, premeditated murder in the guise of industrial conflicts and commercial competition.

Chapter II.

JACK LEAVES HOME.

JACK RALSTON was the son of a gentleman who had been able to give his sons and daughters an education befitting their condition of life, but who had not been able or willing to bring them up in idleness. Jack was the eldest. Of powerful physique and robust constitution, he was much better fitted for the out-of-door life which he loved than for the indoor life he was more immediately destined for. The vastness of the dominion of Canada, extending from the semi-tropical zone thousands of miles northward up to the very pole, and from east to west between three and four thousand miles, taking in every variety of climate and soil, and studded with innumerable lakes of every size, from the lakelet of a square mile to the inland sea of Lake Superior or Hudson Bay, appealed strongly to his imagination. A country that is bounded on the north and south possesses none of the far-off inaccessible and mysterious places which man's fancy fills with wonders and strange adventures. He longs to reach the "undiscovered country" which has such a charm for the human mind. It was so with Jack. The hum-

drum routine of streets, and shops, and well-regulated places generally, was more than he could bear. He longed for the rifle and the gun, the rod, the dog, and the canoe. His father, however, though not averse to such a life himself, was by no means satisfied that it would be the best thing for Jack. It did not hold out much hope for an old age of plenty, nor did it appear desirable from another point of view. Jack's mother was unalterably opposed to the thought of her son's going thousands of miles away to a land of snow and ice, even though in so good a service as that of the Hudson Bay Company. She shrank from the utter and dreadful loneliness of the long winter nights. Visions came before her mind's eye of frightful blizzards, intense cold—her son, away upon his hunting expeditions, caught in the storm, struggling heroically against his fate, perhaps, but at last lying down to die in the drifting snow. However, the Hudson Bay Company's service was finally resolved upon. Jack's mother spent the meantime in sad misgivings, as mothers will do and always have done, God bless them, and in getting Jack's clothes and all sorts of odds and ends ready for him, so that, if anything happened to her dear boy, it would not be her fault. It is needless to state that Jack did not stand in need of any fine garments. Warm underclothes and a few strong serviceable tweeds were all he needed, with a housewife full of needles and thread to keep them in order, since he would have to do some of his own sewing, although the Company provide servants at the posts. But he was not to be always at

the posts. He was to make his way and earn his promotion, and this consisted more in journeying in all directions and in all weathers in slack seasons to stir up the Eskimos and Indians than in doing mere clerical work. Besides, what he might shoot or trap himself would be of profit to him, and his eyes twinkled as he thought of a few silver or black foxes, which alone would agreeably increase his salary.

The *Nan*, the schooner which meets the Company's English ship at the Atlantic coast, was ready to sail from Montreal. She was of Dundee build, and of five hundred tons burden—a tidy vessel. Her cargo consisted of provisions for the Company's posts—flour, biscuit, pork, tea, and molasses, for the men, and for trade with the Indians and Eskimos. Jack boarded her, and in due time met the *Ledic*, to which, with the cargo, he was transferred. The *Ledic* carried, in addition to provender for the officers of the posts, a large store of rifles, guns, and ammunition, which, together with a variety of traps, formed a large part of the "trade," as the means of barter were called. Captain Bray of the *Ledic* was a jolly and daring tar, one accustomed to the rigours of sea life, and a veritable sea-dog. His reputation as a whale-killer made him an interesting personality, and it was with no small degree of awe, therefore, that Jack Ralston at length found himself in his company, and bound for the far north. But the kind-hearted captain had been a boy once himself, and had not forgotten it. When Jack showed the well-known signs of homesickness, as the *Ledic* got

farther and farther away from his beloved home, Captain Bray took kindly to his solitary passenger, and treated him as a father would a son.

"Yes, Jack," said the captain, in response to the inquiries of the young clerk, "I have killed a whale and many another thing that had as good a right to live as I have. But, you see, that's the way the world wags. It seems as if we had to kill these poor things to make a living ourselves. But I'd rather kill whales than seals. Seals seem to know so much, and there are so many of them, that it's like killing a lot of human beings. But, as I said, Jack, we must live; and that year we were short of whales, and had to make up. I missed my whales somehow. It was before I went into the Company's service, and I had sailed from Dundee. It was a far cry to Dundee, and I could not afford to wait for another chance. We headed the *Ledic* for Greenland, and, with fair weather, sailed into the fields of ice. We were expecting seals, and kept a sharp lookout. One morning the mate came in, and says, 'We're in the seals, sir,' and sure enough we were in the seals. As far as the eye could reach there was nothing but seals. I gave orders for the shooting party, and we were not long in getting down on the ice. Each man went his own gait, and by the time we reached the ship again ten of us had killed eleven thousand six hundred and fifty-three seals. I shot five hundred of 'em myself. I would have shot more of the poor things, only I couldn't hold out my rifle, my arms were so tired. It was a successful trip from one point of view, and we sailed

into Dundee, loaded down with the skins and fat of thirty thousand seals."

"That would make a heap of caps, wouldn't it, sir?" said Jack, smiling.

"No, Jack," said the skipper, to Jack's astonishment. "These were jar seals. They have no fur, as you know it. Their pelts are utilized for machinery belts and anything where tough leather is needed."

"It was pretty cold, I suppose, sir," said Jack.

"Ah! you may bet it was cold," replied Captain Bray, laughing. "Ice and snow—ice and snow. Some people are always in hot water, but I have always been in cold water."

Jack laughed heartily at the skipper's joke, and somehow the load of homesickness grew lighter, and Jack's thoughts wandered away to the field of ice.

The next post after Rigolette, where the *Ledic* had met the *Nan*, was Davis Inlet. As the *Ledic* was to lie there for forty-eight hours, Jack went ashore.

The Company's officers were very kind to him, and as one of the junior officers shook him heartily by the hand he extended to him the first greeting of welcome to the service. "You're one of us now, Mr. Ralston, and don't forget us. We Hudson Bay men are very clannish, you know. It's like freemasonry: we never forget each other."

Jack felt the tingle of the blood of manhood in his veins, and was glad that the down on his upper lip had come early in life. The ship's crew worked hard, and by nightfall of the second day they were all aboard and ready to sail at daybreak. They would make Nachvack in two days, the

next post. But a dense fog fell soon after leaving Davis Inlet, and to add to the danger of their position, they ran into a field of ice. The skipper required all the resources for which he was famous. There was nothing to go by, neither sun nor moon, stars nor sight of land. A gale set in, and the heaving of the ship made Jack very seasick. He would gladly have gone ashore anywhere. The wildest part of this bleak, inhospitable coast was none too wild for the seasick lad, if it were only near enough to set a firm foot on. However, at last the gale blew the fog away, and the *Ledic*, with bearings found, made good time under steam and canvas. Nearing Nachvack, as the ship sailed alongshore, the brilliant sunlight made even small things visible, and to his great joy Jack saw the famous Silver Falls, which are over two thousand feet in height. The sheet of water breaks near the top into a thousand streams, which fall pell-mell down the mountain-side into the sea. It was an unusual and beautiful sight. One can scarcely conceive the effect of so exquisite a spectacle. The myriad streams flashed like ten thousand swords in the sun, while, on either side, the moss-covered mountain-side, green and velvety, softened the brilliancy of the scene.

The *Ledic* reached Nachvack in daylight. The solitary officer of this post, with his wife and family, greeted her. Jack could not imagine how any man could live alone with his family in such a cold, remote, and solitary station. His heart went down into his boots at the prospect before himself at Ungava, if it was to be anything like this. But if the solitary condition of the officer was de-

pressing, the loyalty and self-sacrifice of his noble wife, who did not hesitate to share the trials as well as the happiness of her husband, called forth Jack's unbounded admiration. It must not be forgotten that contentment paves the way for a happy life anywhere. A resolve to do one's duty and not grumble about it, maintaining the attitude of conscientiousness all the while in everything, is the foundation of happiness. Home-life, however, is impossible without a wife and children. Its responsibilities are its joys. While the officer, Mr. Hartson, was getting things in shape to receive his stock, the ship's officers and Jack indulged in a snowball battle. Under ordinary circumstances this frolicsome proceeding would have appeared ludicrous; but men are only boys in disguise, and need only the occasion to show it. Long confinement—the result, of course, of being shut up within the wooden walls of a small vessel—gave them all an intense desire to stretch their limbs. This playful introduction to the coast of Labrador, in contempt, as it were, of the rigours of the climate, took off what remained of the sharp edge of Jack's homesickness, and he now began to pine for the freedom, the solitariness, the weirdness, and the danger of his life-to-be at Fort Hope.

On the day following their arrival at Nachvack, the captain told Jack that he was at liberty to go on a deer-hunt if he felt inclined, and regretted that he himself was unable to take advantage of the opportunity. So Jack shouldered his sixteen repeater Winchester, and started into the mountains which rise in awe-inspiring grandeur

behind and to the north and south of Nachvack. He walked for eight weary miles along the mountain-sides skirting the bay, but apart from old tracks found nothing. However, his attention was fully occupied by two things, one being the splendour of the sea view, and the other the condition of his feet. Climbing up the rough mountain with improperly protected feet was no joke, as Jack soon found out, although, when he returned to the ship, his messmates seemed to think it was, and laughed heartily.

Once more the *Ledic* put to sea, and for the first few days had favourable weather, but after that fog and ice-packs hindered her progress.

"That's the mouth of your river, sir," said the mate, pointing to the mouth of the Ungava River; "we call there and put you down comin' back. We're heading for Churchill, to the north of Hudson Bay, and if we don't make good time we'll never reach it, or if we do we may not be able to get back."

"Does the ice pack like that, mate?" asked Jack.

The mate laughed. "You wait a bit, and you'll see ice-packs to your heart's content, sir."

On the way through the strait Jack got his first sight of a walrus. He was called by the lookout at 4 a.m. with the announcement that walruses were visible on the star-board quarter about a mile ahead. A boat's crew and Jack to do the shooting were dispatched. Five were shot; but as they are lean in autumn and do not float, and as the boat had no harpoon, they sank and were lost. One big fellow, who led the rest in an attack on the boat, gave Jack

a lot of trouble and nearly succeeded in smashing it. They are well named sea-lions, for their courage and voices remind one of the monarch of the forest. By accident he wounded on the following day a young walrus, which uttered a cry just like that of a child; and as its mother, who was a few feet ahead of it, turned at the cry, the young one leaped forward and clasped her about the neck. Jack did not fully recover from this painful scene for a day or two.

Just outside the mouth of the Churchill River a polar bear was sighted. A boat was lowered and manned, and the second officer with Jack set out. The bear was in the water swimming about, and both fired. As neither the second officer nor Jack put their balls in exactly the right spot, it took no less than six to kill him, after which he was hauled aboard, but with difficulty. At Churchill all was excitement, not only on account of the visit of the *Ledic* being its annual one, but also because the Company's schooner *Princess* was there, awaiting the arrival of the *Ledic* before departing on its return trip to York, which is situated at the southern end of the great bay.

On the day following the *Ledic's* arrival, Captain Bray and Jack set out to kill porpoises. After loading their boat with as many as it would stand, they proceeded farther up the river, in the direction of the fort itself, which, on account of the shallows at the river's mouth, is built eleven miles from it. But the tide was out, and the evening had set in foggy and wild, in consequence of which they had great difficulty in making headway. At last they reached the desired spot—as they thought—and put in; but it was

only one of the numerous coves, and being unusually rocky our travellers soon found themselves high and dry on a rock. After considerable trouble and no little risk the boat was at length got off, and Captain Bray and Jack were glad at last to see the unmistakable lights of the fort not far away.

On Sunday, a fearful gale blew, and the *Ledic* was in danger of going ashore, but she escaped by the skin of her teeth. Captain Bray was now anxious to put to sea and bear away for Ungava on the return trip. Jack was in a hurry too. On returning from the fort in the small boat he was standing up looking for a shot when she gave a lurch, and into the sea head over heels he went, gun and all. The gun and his heavy clothing kept him under water for some time, but he pluckily held on to the gun, and on appearing at the surface was seized and quickly hauled aboard. The sea was rough, and as the boat could not then make the ship, Jack had to remain in his wet clothes. It was fortunate that the sun was hot, for the water was ice-cold.

The day following, the *Ledic* set sail for Ungava after a hearty acknowledgment of the kindness of the people at Fort Churchill. Bears were sighted some distance ahead on an ice-floe. The boat was lowered as usual, and Mr. Ross and Jack held the artillery. It was arranged that Mr. Ross should take the bow and kill his bear, and then make way for Jack, who would have his shot. Mr. Ross killed one, severely wounding another. This one turned and made rapidly for the boat. Mr. Ross could not reload, as his rifle had jammed, and he stepped back. By this time

the bear was clambering over the side of the boat; but as Jack had received no official intimation of Mr. Ross's difficulty, he did not think of shooting—such an act being one of great discourtesy. But when the bear was just a rifle-length away from Jack, who held his ground bravely, Mr. Ross cried out, "Why don't you fire, you fool? Do you want us all killed?" Jack needed no further intimation, and putting the muzzle of his rifle into the bear's mouth, fired. The monstrous brute relaxed his bloody jaws, and, as he was more than half-way in the boat at the time, his head dropped forward, and the crew pulled him in. Jack was the subject of much congratulation, and was not a little proud of his huge trophy.

"Well, Jack, you're not a bad shot for a lad," said Mr. Ross; "we'll have some of that fine fellow for dinner to-morrow." Jack said nothing, and Mr. Ross, looking quizzically at him, asked, "Don't you like bear's meat?"

"No, sir," said Jack emphatically.

"But you would eat it, I suppose, if you hadn't anything else, or wished to save your other provender?"

"No, sir; I don't think I should. I don't like the idea of it, and I am sure it would make me ill."

Next day at dinner a fine joint of beef, garnished in the usual way with roast potatoes, came on the table. Jack never for a moment thought of anything else than beef; but, when he had made a hearty meal, the captain said, "Well, Jack, how did you like the bear's meat?"

"O Jinks!" cried Jack in dismay, "was that bear's meat, sir?"

"Ay, that it was," replied the captain, laughing heartily.

The voyage to Ungava was a long succession of headwinds, fog, and ice-packs ; but after ten days' steaming and sailing the *Ledic* made the mouth of the Ungava, just in time, however, to miss the tide, which, had they caught it, would have enabled them to go on to their destination, Fort Hope, thirty miles from its mouth. After anchoring, Jack took a boat's crew and landed. Ducks were very plentiful but wild. They met Indians fishing, and as it was the first time he had seen these Indian denizens of the far north, he took particular notice of them. They were a tall, fine-looking set of men, and broad shouldered, but a little too lanky, as Jack thought, in the legs. This did not apply, however, to Nashtegash, a splendid specimen of the Nauscopees, or North River Indians, who, though not a chief, seemed to hold the position of leadership amongst them, to which his muscular build and lofty bearing entitled him.

Chapter III.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

FORT HOPE proved to be all that Jack's fancy had painted it. The Company's officers were very kind, and beyond a shivery feeling or two of desolation at the prospect of five long years in the arctic wilds, nothing occurred to make him regret his decision to enter the service. He was heartily received, and consigned to the society of the wife and daughter of Mr. Paterson, the chief officer of the post. Mrs. Paterson extended her hand to Jack in motherly welcome, knowing well how lonely the young lad must feel, since she and her daughter, two of the nine white people in all that vast region, themselves knew what it was at times to feel the isolation of their position. Still, Linda, as the young girl was named, was as sweet as she was pretty; and no wrinkle of discontent or frown of displeasure could linger, even for a moment, on her pretty face.

Fort Hope was situate on a low, undulating shore, backed and flanked by mountainous hills, and with, as we have said, the Ungava River running past it on the west side. The prospect in front is that of a wide and

fast-running river, in width a mile and a half, and running, when the tide is out, at a rate of twelve miles an hour. It is for this reason that the Company's ship, in making the annual visit, has to wait for the tide in ascending the river. Otherwise, its progress would be slow and dangerous, if, indeed, appreciable. Beyond this expanse of rapidly-running water the landscape is composed of an endless succession of mountains, forming, with the river, a picturesque and striking scene. Immediately behind the fort the hills are precipitous and jagged, and to a large extent covered by a low brush and the well-known arctic moss. In certain lights and at particular seasons the variety and beauty of the colouring on the mountain-sides is enchanting, and Jack felt that the beauty of the region quite made up for its remoteness from civilization. The houses of the officers and servants at the post were built within a palisade, and with the various warehouses and storehouses close at hand, with a view to protection and to accessibility during the frightful storms of winter. Fort Hope was built upon the site of the former fort, which had been burned down one wild winter night by the usually peace-loving Eskimos, who slew every creature inhabiting it. The fury of the Eskimos, though misdirected and over-violent in its outcome, was reasonable in its origin, a gross wrong having been done to the inhabitants of a small village by one of the servants at the post. The Eskimos are an upright and honest race, exhibiting in these and other respects all the highest qualities of more civilized peoples; but being of a

simple and unsophisticated nature, they are apt to act suddenly and with great passion when aroused. And they are well able to act when aroused, too, as they are a sturdy and powerful people, some of them being considerably over six feet in height, and built in proportion. Their endurance, also, is almost beyond belief. It is usually supposed that the Eskimos are a short and flabby people, but this is a mistake. This idea is no doubt due to their peculiar dress.

Shortly after the departure of the *Ledie* an incident occurred that came very near proving disastrous. It was expected by the master that, as usual, the Indians and Eskimos, knowing of the probable arrival of the ship at this season with "trade" for their furs, would come in; but by the evening of the second day after its arrival only a few had arrived, in addition to the small number already there. Mr. Paterson grew slightly apprehensive, and called Mr. Coleridge, the second officer to one side.

"What do you think the reason is?" asked he.

"I don't know, sir, although I saw some of the Muskogons in the hills with my glass this morning from 'the peak.' I fully expected that they would have come in some time ago, not later than noon. There is no doubt that the other Indians are near at hand; but as for the Eskimos, I don't think they have come up the river yet," said he.

"It's peculiar, and yet I don't like to think anything is wrong," continued Mr. Paterson. "Tell Davis not to let the men go out after dark, and to shut the fort up, at

least in the rear. We never can be too sure of these fellows. Covetousness is not a vice of any one branch alone of the human family. Tell young Ralston to come in for a game of cards. He's too new to the situation to be allowed a free hand just yet, although he looks as plucky as he is undoubtedly powerful. It is just as well to have him about too."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Coleridge, turning and walking back to the fort to carry out these directions.

It is a peculiar thing how people scent danger sometimes without knowing why, and it is fortunate that they do.

The night drew rapidly in, for it had grown very cloudy about dusk, and it became difficult to see clearly farther than ten feet from the lights of the fort, which were simply the usual lights in the sitting-room. Mr. Paterson found an excuse for leaving the small card-party, and went into his office across the hall, where he could sit at the window in the darkness and see any object that came close enough to the light of the other window. About nine o'clock he was startled by seeing a stealthy form approach the sitting-room window, and before he could warn them or raise an alarm an Indian rose and pointed his fowling-piece. Jack had just risen from the table, when a loud report was heard, a bullet crashing through the window and embedding itself in the ceiling. In a twinkling he turned, blew out the lamps, and rushed for the door, which Mr. Paterson, however, had just locked. Beyond the crash, and the shrieks of Mrs. Paterson and Linda at the moment of the report, no sound above a whisper was uttered; and

Mr. Paterson, having been assured by his wife that they were unharmed, turned to meet Mr. Coleridge and Davis, who came hurrying in, groping their way along the hall.

"Here are the rifles," whispered Mr. Coleridge.

Mr. Paterson reached out and took one, directing Coleridge and Jack to arm themselves and take their stations. Just then the office window came in with a crash; and surmising what would follow, Jack rushed to it, running against an Indian, whose body was already half-way in. Seizing him by the shoulders, he secured a wrestling hold, and hurled him with a terrific smash upon the floor. Before the Indian could recover himself, his captor had secured a wrist hold, and giving a sudden and powerful twist had run the Indian's forearm up his back, causing him to turn over on his face. He was now a prisoner. No one followed—probably because two rifles already stuck their muzzles through the window. A candle was brought in by direction of Mr. Paterson, but was kept low along the floor.

"Ha! Weeponung the Snake," exclaimed Davis triumphantly, as the candle revealed the stolid, sullen features of one of the worst of all the Indians of that part of Labrador. "I know him, sir."

"Yes, it is he," added Mr. Paterson, taking a careful look at him. "Bind him."

Jack did not relinquish his hold till the redskin's limbs had been strongly pinioned. The candle was then placed in the corner just where its rays might fall upon the Indian's prostrate form; and Davis was ordered to stand upright in the corner beside it, being well out of the way

of the window, in case a stealthy foe should creep up and see him by the candlelight. But no one came, and the morning light broke as usual upon a peaceful scene, the only outward trace of the preceding night's occurrence being the broken windows.

The master and Mr. Coleridge held a consultation as to what should be done with the Indian. They both agreed that his conduct merited death. It was accordingly directed that he should be court-martialled in a formal way, to give the necessary appearance of justice to the proceeding, and that he should then be shot.

"What do you think, my dear," said Mr. Paterson to his wife, as he entered the day-room, "of our determination?"

"He no doubt intended to kill us?" said his wife.

"No doubt of it," exclaimed Mr. Paterson. "His long knife was in the hand that Jack seized, and his scalping-knife was in his belt; and besides, my dear, his face is smeared with paint."

"Oh, how dreadful!" shuddered Mrs. Paterson.

Jack Ralston came up the hall, tapped at the half-open door, and peeped in.

"Come in, Jack; come in, my dear sir," cried Mr. Paterson, as he turned to greet his clerk. "We owe you our lives."

"Oh no, sir," said Jack, blushing deeply.

"Yes, we do; yes, we do," insisted Mr. Paterson. "We owe you at least one life, for certainly the sinewy brute, at such short range, would have been able to use his knife with good effect in the dark; and if we had fired we might

have shot each other. That was a neat hold of yours. It is quite as good as a knife. I suppose you learned that at school. But a fellow has got to have nerve, and confidence in his strength as well."

Jack said nothing in response to his master's complimentary remarks, but glanced, almost in spite of himself, at Linda, whose pretty face had not yet quite recovered its colour. Jack was a modest fellow, and the prominent part he had been called upon to play quite put him out of countenance. However, he no longer felt that he was a mere lad, nor did the others feel so, since no one could have acted more bravely and promptly; whilst his powerful physique made up for his lack of years in giving him a manly appearance.

"What would you do with the Snake?" asked Mr. Paterson of Jack.

"I can scarcely advise you, sir," said Jack. "It would be presumption on my part."

"No, Jack," said his master. "It would not be presumption, when I ask your opinion. But I am wrong to place the responsibility upon you. I must decide myself. I think we had better carry out our decision."

"Oh! couldn't you put him in prison, my dear?" pleaded Mrs. Paterson, who was horrified at the thought of the shedding of blood, even when it was in the cause of justice. "Do, I beg of you. Linda and I will never feel happy, quite so happy, again; for you know, my dear, we are women, and cannot stand the recollection any more than the sight of blood."

Mr. Paterson was deeply concerned over this new difficulty. He knew that what his wife said was quite true, while, on the other hand, it was doubtful policy to attempt to keep in prison, even till the arrival of the next ship, now nearly a year off, so slippery a customer as an Indian, and so dangerous a man as this one. After a few moments' further reflection, he withdrew and went out to the men's quarters.

"Davis, make some manacles for this fellow. I shall imprison him, for a time at least—perhaps till the next boat."

"Yes, sir," said Davis, touching his cap, but his face showed a condition of greater perplexity than his master's, as the latter went back into the house. "My God, surely he's not goin' to trust to iron bands for them devils. We'll all be murdered sure!"

Mr. Paterson met Pilo at the inner gate.

"What do you think about it, Pilo?"

Pilo was a French-Canadian—a true type of the original *voyageur*—strong in person, pleasant-featured, and without fear. He knew what Indians were, and what they were not, which is quite as important.

"I tink, master," replied Pilo respectfully, "dat dere is someding behind all dis. De Indians would not attack us of dere own accord in dis way, I do not tink. If dey attack us it would be in a clever—a more clever way dan dis. I tink only few Indians in dis trouble. I suspect someding."

"What do you suspect, Pilo?" asked Mr. Paterson.

"I tink dat de free-trader is at de bo' of it."

The free-trader in the far north is one who trades on his own account. He is always a white man, and sometimes a discharged employee of the Company. There are not many free-traders, but they do a great deal of harm both to the trade and to the native inhabitants of the country. He is usually quite unscrupulous, and uses whisky—that frightful curse of the aborigines—as an inducement for trading with him, in preference to the Company. When under its influence, or with the prospect of getting it, these poor creatures will sacrifice all they have. Fortunately, however, this piratical style of trading has not yet gone very far, but it is already responsible for much of the trouble and misfortune both of the Eskimos and the Indians. Whisky, in fact, is the worst enemy they have, excepting occasional scarcity of food, which latter condition of things might easily be remedied if they had any idea whatever of providence. But when they have plenty they gorge, or feast, as they call it, and waste a great deal; and when there is a scarcity—that is, when game does not come their way—they are soon reduced to the verge of starvation. In such cases the Company generously aids them, and treats them fairly, whilst the free-traders abandon them or treat them with usurious harshness. But the temptation of whisky seems irresistible notwithstanding.

Mr. Paterson rather wondered that he himself had not thought of this before. The next question, then, was how to find out who was at the bottom of the attack.

"How shall we find out, Pilo?" said he.

"From old Crookback, sir. He de frien' of de Company."

"Ah, yes; but then he may not be hereabouts," said the master.

"Yes, sir; but I could find out. I can go to de camp up de river and ask him."

"But you would run a risk in that."

"A leetle only. I find out dough."

The easy, casual manner of the voyageur reassured Mr. Paterson, so he bade him choose his own time and to go. Besides, he had just a suspicion himself that the Indian had smelt slightly of whisky when captured. He would ask Jack about that. Meanwhile Pilo set out on his little journey of inquiry.

"Did the Snake smell of whisky, Jack, when you pinioned him?" asked Mr. Paterson of the young clerk, who had responded to his summons.

Jack thought a moment.

"Yes, sir; he did. I am positive it was whisky, though of course, sir, he smells of a variety of things."

"Yes, Jack," said Mr. Paterson, smiling; "but I am glad you feel sure of the whisky, because it may aid us in fixing the responsibility for this wholly unexpected and unreasonable attack."

Pilo shortly after emerged from the fort, wholly unarmed. He walked briskly along the river-bank till he was almost lost sight of at the camp of the Indians. They were few, as he suspected, and were very angry at

Weeponung and his companions, who had accepted the free-trader's bribe to attack the fort. The crooked-backed Indian to whom Pilo referred spoke out boldly, and though his words were not many, they showed Pilo that his first conclusion was right.

"What shall we do with him?" asked Pilo, in the Indian tongue. "He ought to suffer death."

"Ugh! He is a bad Indian anyway," said old Crook-back. "Keep him or kill him. He was drunk with the white man's fire-water, or he would never have attacked two eagles in one nest. The Company is no wolf."

"Are there many with him in his plot to attack the fort?" inquired Pilo.

"No; he was alone. The Snake goes alone," said the Indian.

Certainly, from appearances, this seemed true, and a gun had been picked up at the window of the sitting-room; but Pilo could hardly believe that one Indian, even if crazed with drink, would attack a fort well garrisoned and armed. However, he reached the fort in safety, and reported to his master. It was then decided to await the coming of Black Eagle from Hudson Bay, who would be along with his party from the west very soon.

Meanwhile the Snake was kept closely confined. In a week after, Black Eagle arrived, and in response to the request of Mr. Paterson he took the Snake away with him, still bound, and promised to deliver him over to the custody of the Company's officers at Moose Factory. The distance was so great to this post that Mr. Paterson felt

safe in recommending that he be set at liberty by the officer there, but not allowed to leave the neighbourhood.

Black Eagle was a fine specimen of the red man—tall, athletic, sinewy, supple, and quick in action. His face frequently lit up with a very pleasant, good-natured smile, but like all Indians he had a countenance expressive of the wisdom of the serpent rather than the harmlessness of the dove. He was a renowned warrior, and brought with him several of his tribe, who had gone with him incredible distances in quest of game and adventure.

Chapter IV.

A HUNTING EXPEDITION.

THE winter was now almost at hand. Mr. Paterson was anxious that additional fresh meat and fish should be secured, as it could now be frozen; and, as the reader may suppose, the bulk of the provender is got by hunting and fishing. If game happens to be scarce—that is, if it has gone off in other directions—then the outlook at the post is gloomy for all concerned. The natives, having no fur to trade or game to feed upon, are rendered naturally desperate, and are both dangerous and unpleasant in the neighbourhood of the fort. Sometimes they demand that food be given them, or even threaten to take it. The whites too have to put themselves on short commons, and as the stock meats are all heavily salted for long keeping, they are by no means an agreeable diet for a long period. Accordingly, Mr. Paterson directed Jack to take a party and start on a hunt. Jack was delighted at the prospect, as the rugged mountains and flowing streams afforded a prospect of plenty of sport and excitement. He was directed to take his course some two hundred miles up the river, as it was reported by the Indians that plenty of game was to be found there.

Careful preparations were made, as this was the chief of the hunting parties, and a great deal depended upon it. Three of the six white employees at the post were placed at Jack's disposal. He chose Morrison, an Orkneyman, who was known to be a good shot, and M'Diarmid, a brawny Scotsman, who could be relied upon in pretty nearly any emergency, although occasionally taking fits of sullenness, due, no doubt, to a long and somewhat solitary sojourn in the wilderness. Before being employed by the Company, M'Diarmid's dwelling-place had been near the Atlantic coast, in a cave where he lived alone, and from the door of which the rolling ocean was visible some thirty miles away. The third man was Mowat, a half-breed and interpreter, and in every way a typical hunter.

The morning of setting out was made the occasion by Mr. Paterson of prayers to the Almighty that He would look favourably upon the undertaking, fraught as it was with so much importance to the little community. When the hour came for the hunters to take their departure, the necessary preparations having been completed, Mr. Paterson, with his wife and daughter, went down to the shore to see them off. As Jack looked at this charming girl, he could not help feeling that his lines had fallen in pleasant places, and that if he were spared to become a man no greater reward could be reserved for him than her hand.

Though the morning of their departure was bright and clear, before noon the sky clouded over, and the heavens presented a gloomy aspect. It came on to rain and blow violently, but as the wind was from the north it helped

them on their voyage. As evening drew near, Jack made up his mind to camp at the first favourable spot; but the idea of camping ceased to occupy his attention before the time of putting it into execution arrived. The half-breed had suddenly laid his hand upon Jack's arm, and pointed up into the mountains to a low ridge that ran along for some distance, at the farthest extremity of which Jack could discern the dim outline of a deer, and he instantly gave directions to go ashore. As there had been no luck so far during the entire hunting season, owing to the scarcity of game, Jack was anxious to secure as quickly as possible an ample supply. Though it was now too late in the day to safely engage in a pursuit that might take them some distance from the intending camping-place, yet it was the time of the new moon; and if, as Jack hoped, the clouds should break away, they could at least reconnoitre and then follow up in the morning. The Scotsman and Morrison went to the south—that is, up the river—while Jack and the half-breed went to the north-east, below the ridge. The walking was extremely difficult, the side of the ridge being a succession of rampart-like cliffs, and the brush, indistinguishable in the pale light, was a hindrance rather than a support. Mowat had eyes like a panther, however, and several times saved Jack from falling into crevices which would have certainly formed his last resting-place, being both deep and quite inaccessible. As they rounded a long promontory at the end of the ridge, a fine herd of deer came into view, feeding on a low plateau between two of the smaller mountains and skirting a stream. It

was about the time also to look for the arrival of Morrison and M'Diarmid at the other side, and if by chance they should fire a shot at a single deer, or mayhap a bear—which was not unlikely, in view of the scarcity of game and of the journey's end being yet a long way off—the vision before our two hunters would certainly vanish in the cañon on the left.

Their suspense was great. The moon too was beginning to get low down, and the fine light that had illumined the valley as from a lamp at the top of a room now began to pale away to a mere nothing. They stood looking about for some time in quest of a sign from Morrison or his companion, but none came; so they concluded to stalk the deer if possible, and get the quarry without further help. They slung their rifles over their backs, Jack being content to imitate his more experienced companion, and getting down on all fours they started forward. They had gone on for about two hundred yards in this way when Jack discerned the figure of a man high up on the mountain-top opposite. He called Mowat's attention to him, and the latter put up his hand in dismay. If they were all four behind the deer, a shot or two would be all they could possibly get, and it was such a fine chance. The half-breed was perplexed. The deer might disappear at any moment. Suddenly, and apparently without any cause, a stampede ensued, the deer coming straight towards Jack and Mowat up the pathway by which they were crawling down.

"Wolves!" exclaimed Mowat. "Come in here, and

when the first deer is within range, let him have it, and keep it up."

The deer came on like a whirlwind. It took but a moment. The howling of the wolves in hot pursuit was now clearly heard. It sounded closer and closer, and then ceased altogether. The wolves had caught up with the rear end of the herd.

"Now let them have it, sir," cried Mowat, and almost simultaneously their rifles poured forth their messengers of death.

"I must have missed," cried Jack.

"No, no; fire!" shouted the half-breed.

"Have I fired too high?" Jack eagerly inquired.

"No. Fire! fire!" cried Mowat excitedly. "You can't see what you've killed."

By this time the herd had come abreast of the hunters in their little niche, and was galloping madly on. Here and there Jack could see a wolf leaping upon the back of his victim. In a moment more the deer with the wolves had passed like an avalanche, leaving, however, several of their number behind.

"Ho! ho! It's you, is it?" said a voice just behind them. Morrison was standing on the edge of a low, overhanging rock.

"Yes," said Jack, looking up in astonishment. "Come down.—How are we to get these deer to the boat, Mowat?"

"Easy, sir," said the half-breed, shrugging his shoulders.

"How?" asked Jack again, for he could not guess how

these mountains were to be scaled in the middle of the night, and carcasses of deer carried out of reach of the wolves.

"Float them down to the boat," answered Mowat quietly.

"What! will dead deer float?" exclaimed the astonished Jack.

"Yes, in this country. You'll see," answered Mowat.

And what Mowat said was proven true. For the first time in his life Jack saw deer carried down to the water's edge and dumped in like so many logs. Morrison stood below to boom them in, while Mowat undid his girdle and unplaited a long strip of leather, thin but tough and pliable. He tied this about the horns of each of the bucks, putting the does in the middle, and then walked along the edge of the stream, sometimes in the water, sometimes on dry land, the others following. When they had got to the mouth of the stream, where it joined the main river, the task of "tracking" to the canoes was comparatively easy. Peculiar as this proceeding was, it was not so peculiar to Jack as the light that still continued in the heavens long after the moon had been lost to sight. The others, too, were ignorant of the cause, some saying one thing and others another, all being agreed, however, that it came from the moon, and was due to the state of the atmosphere. The carcasses having been bled at the time of the shooting, it remained for the hunters to clean and hang them up. This took some time, and was by no means pleasant work; but the sight of thirty-eight victims of their repeaters

reconciled the hunters to the labours of the night. The men had just about given the finishing touches to their work, when the half-breed called out from the water's edge,—

“Where is our canoe, Mr. Ralston?”

This remark spread consternation, for they all knew that Mowat would never ask such a question without cause. A diligent search all along the shore failed in its object, although Morrison went fully a mile down.

“There is the current,” thought Jack; “what else could happen than that it has been carried down?”

Neither M'Diarmid nor the half-breed could solve the mystery otherwise, and as for Morrison, he expressed a decided opinion that the earth had opened and gobbled it up.

“What's that, Morrison?” cried Jack, pointing towards the middle of the river some distance away.

“By gum! I don't know, sir,” said Morrison, scratching his head.

The object was barely visible. The half-breed had meanwhile slipped into the other canoe and begun that long, graceful, easy stroke that soon put him within reach of it. Those on shore eagerly awaited news of their means of locomotion, but Mowat, who had a good deal of the calmness and stoicism of the Indian side of his nature, gave no sign. He merely reached for the parted anchor rope, and using it as a hawser, started back for shore, towing the recreant craft, without comment. The respect of Jack's companions for him increased not a little in view of his being the first to descry the precious little vessel. They were glad now to be able to lie down and sleep in peace.

"What's this?" called out M'Diarmid in his broadest Scotch, as he stood up to stretch his limbs.

A canoe was approaching. It was no other than Sambo, the negro servant at the fort. Sambo was a useful fellow in his way, and not a bad cook, but was chiefly made use of as an element of amusement in a land where there was not much fun. But M'Diarmid couldn't bear him, and had freely expressed his opinion that negroes were a dirty, thieving lot. It seems he had lost a small knife a year or so before, and blamed the negro for it; but Sambo stoutly denied taking it, and his master believed him.

Of course everybody thought he had been sent with some message by the master.

"Well, Sambo," said Jack, as the negro drew up and touched his cap, "what message have you?"

"Mistah Patson say dat me come and cook for Massa Jack," replied the negro, grinning, "an' help skin de deer."

"What!" exclaimed Jack in astonishment. "Did the master send you away up here to cook for us? I don't believe a word of it."

"Yes, massa, him did. Missus Patson she say de men's all away. Massa let Sambo go cook for de young gentleman. I smile and I say, 'Yes, inassa, me ketch Massa Roilstone and de ole Scotchmans;' and him say, 'Is Teddy here?' and I say, 'Yes, he do de cookin', and anyhow dere ain't nuffin to cook.' He laffed like a loon, and him say, 'Gone, Sambo, and doan loose yersef.' Ha! ha! him know Sambo good hunter. He find Massa Jack and de Scotchmans."

"Shut up, ye doting idiot," roared M'Diarmid, annoyed

beyond measure at the negro's familiarity. Morrison also looked very black, but Jack did not wish to send the negro back, if, as he now suspected, his story was true that Mr. Paterson had allowed him to come.

The offended dignity of M'Diarmid would have been highly amusing on any other occasion, but on the present one it was by no means so, being likely to add to the young clerk's burden in trying his hand for the first time at the head of a hunting party.

"Tak' that, ye black gorilla!" roared M'Diarmid, as Sambo flew along the beach in mock anxiety to get out of the way of the Scotsman's boot.

Jack rightly felt that the sooner the difficulty was solved the better it would be for all concerned. Accordingly he called Mowat, in whom he had learned to place great confidence, to one side.

"What had we better do with Sambo, Mowat? I feel that there will be no end of trouble between him and M'Diarmid."

"Yes, sir," replied the half-breed quietly; "Sambo had better go back with the deer."

"They would float again, you think?"

"Yes, sir."

"And there would be no risk in sending him in charge?"

"I hardly think so, sir."

"Very well," said Jack, greatly relieved; "I shall do that at once. Send him to me."

Sambo approached Jack very meekly, no doubt expecting reproof.

"Sambo," said Jack.

"Yes, sah!" replied that worthy, his eyes rolling with surprise at the gentle tone of his master.

"Can you take those deer back to camp?"

"You bet I can, sir. Carry 'em," chuckled Sambo.

"Nonsense!" said Jack sternly. "I don't want any more of your nonsense, just now at any rate."

"Yes, sah!" said Sambo, whose irrepressible powers of speech often stood him in bad as well as good stead.

"Now, I want you to get up early in the morning," began Jack.

"Yes, sah—before daylight?"

"Shut up! confound you."

"Yes, sah!" came again from the broad red lips in jubilant tones. Jack looked at him angrily, but the negro's straight face saved him.

"I want you to be ready by daylight, and then tow or guide, I don't care which, the boom of deer down to the post. And if anything happens it, Heaven help you; that's all I've got to say."

"Yes, sah," said Sambo, making a profound salaam and taking his departure, when he saw his master had finished giving his commands.

"Shan't we put out traps, sir?" inquired Morrison.

"The sun is weak."

"Undoubtedly," said Jack, who being new at the work had forgotten all about this important part of the duty of every hunter. "Make what preparations you think are necessary."

"Very well, sir. I think we may get a fox up a bit."

The dawn of the next day saw the entire party ready for departure. Sambo was as quiet as the proverbial mouse, took his instructions with all the docility and attention of a negro who never smiled, and half an hour after the breaking of day was on his way downstream, guiding the boom of deer. More than one laugh was indulged in at the sight of his frightened face, as he kept turning his head downstream and upstream and then at the deer, on the principle of a toy clock and with clocklike regularity, till lost to sight.

"What are you looking at so anxiously?" inquired Jack of Mowat, as he stepped into the canoe.

"The weather, sir," replied the half-breed, his eyes giving a searching look as they wandered over the cloud lining of the sky.

"What do you think of it?"

"Goin' to be very cold. Those clouds mean snow, and when the north wind blows the frost will follow it. It's goin' to be very cold soon."

"What did Morrison mean by saying that the sun is weak, Mowat?" asked Jack reflectively.

"It's time to trap, sir. The snow is late, but the small ice is here."

"Well, but what has trapping to do with a weak sun?"

"When the sun is weak the weather gets cold and the fur is good," replied the half-breed. "The fur of the white, the silver, the gray, the black foxes, and the cross fox and

the blue, the otter, mink, marten, beaver, the polar, the wolf, and the devil, is good now—worth catching.”

“What do you mean by the devil?” asked Jack, laughing.

“That’s the wolverine. Ah! he is the devil sure,” replied Mowat.

The Indians have given the wolverine this satanic name, on account of his extreme cunning and destructiveness. It is commonly supposed that the fox is the true type of the cunning animals, but he is not at all a match for “the devil,” who in addition to great cunning possesses great strength and a fiendish inclination to kill and tear for the very love of it. He has also been known to successfully defend himself against three wolves; and whilst two Eskimo dogs are a match for the largest wolf, they are no match for a wolverine, who lies down on his back and is prepared to disembowel them with his sharp claws as fast as they come within reach. Of all the fur-bearing animals he is the one most dreaded by the hunter and amongst the least valuable.

“It’s better to wait for the snow and dogs, though, for trapping,” volunteered the half-breed after a pause.

“Why?” asked Jack.

“Because we can go over plenty of country and set lots of traps.”

“Well then, do you think we had better go back now and get the dogs ready for the snow when it comes?”

“No. I would go on now, and then go back.”

Jack was not a little puzzled at all this, but he had to

learn some time, and he concluded to ferret out all he could.

"Why do Morrison and M'Diarmid want to set the traps now, then?" said Jack, rather annoyed.

"The moss is plenty and the fur good," replied Mowat.

"But I thought they said that the traps had to be hidden in the snow," continued Jack.

"That's in winter time; but when there is no snow they use moss, and there's plenty of moss hereabouts."

"Humph!" said Jack, as he drew a long breath and began to paddle again.

They paddled quietly on till about ten o'clock, when Jack decided to call a halt and hold a consultation.

"Now, Morrison, you are the oldest," said Jack; "what had we better do?"

"I would say, sir, that we would do better to wait and fish and see if the snow comes. It's not so cold as it was, and Mac and I think there's winter ahead," said Morrison, ignoring the half-breed's opinion, whatever it might be.

"And you, M'Diarmid?"

"Ay, sir," said the Scotsman.

"Very well then, we shall wait for the weather; and if it's not too long coming, we'll go back for the dogs and the sleighs."

At the first stream on their side flowing into the river they pulled ashore again and prepared the fishing-tackle.

It turned very cold again during the night, and except at the mouth the stream was frozen over, and floating ice in the river came thick and fast. Unlike the people of

lower latitudes, the Eskimos fish in a very primitive way, baiting a common hook with a piece of pork; but the dignity of the white man is such that nothing satisfies it other than the regulation fly, nay, two flies—for two flies are always cast at once, usually a double luck and a two-fold excitement rewarding the caster. Trout vary from seven pounds for a brook-trout to twelve pounds for a sea-trout. The latter are considered by Canadians the most delicious eating in the world. Salmon, of course, are in great plenty, both fresh and salt water. These northern waters are a perfect paradise for fishermen. In the winter time, when the ice coat has fallen upon the purling waters, a more prosaic but not less effective method than the rod and line is used sometimes.

Morrison, who was the most untiring if not the most successful fisherman of the party, took, as was his wont, a position apart from the others; and finding that the ice was quite strong enough to bear him, he "rigged up" the proper equipment for fishing through the ice—namely, a string, a weight for sinker, and a piece of red flannel where the hook usually is. Having completed this, he went back to the canoe for his spear, and was soon sitting like an Eskimo over his kudalick, dangling the red bait up and down with his left hand, while in his right he held poised the small spear which ever and anon shot through the hole in the ice and returned to the surface with a victim of curiosity and imprudence. As it was not necessary to lay in a stock of fish for the fort, as they had done of game, since fish are as numerous as "sand upon the sea-shore" at all seasons,

enough were taken to keep the party going for a few days only, and the advance was continued. It is not necessary to give a further detailed account of this trip beyond saying that it was successful so far as the sudden coming of winter permitted, and that Jack returned to find himself in evident favour with Mr. Paterson, who had come to consider him a "lucky" fellow, which with some people is accounted better than experience. Still it is an undoubted fact that some people seem always to come out right side up, whilst others, though able to lay plans worthy of "the Polytechnic," never succeed in bringing them to fruition. Jack was now, as we have said, considered a lucky fellow, and his good fortune had prompted a new idea in the master's mind. It is not perhaps quite correct to call it a new idea, for it was a long-cherished ambition, but it had lain dormant in Mr. Paterson's mind until chance should give him the desired instrument. He thought he had found him at last in Jack Ralston.

Chapter V.

THE HOME OF THE MANITOU.

BETWEEN Hudson Strait on the north and the partially-explored land on the south, and Hudson Bay on the west and Labrador proper on the east, is a tract of land some ninety to a hundred thousand square miles in extent, as yet wholly unexplored.

Geologists have long believed that minerals could be found there whose ore was transportable by the northern waterways during a season long enough for the purpose, whilst it was undoubtedly the fact, also, that it was the undisturbed breeding-ground of the fur-bearing game. A few successful seasons in that quarter would be so remunerative that, even if there were no minerals, promotion, no less than pecuniary recompense, must surely follow.

The Eskimos, beyond fishing along its coast, and where their favourite seals were to be met with, had left this large tract of country as severely alone as if it were haunted. The Indians, believing it to be the home of the Manitou, held firmly to the idea that their happy hunting-grounds lay in this direction, and they have never desired to cross the Stillwater, Larch, and Koaksoak Rivers,

which bound this region on the south. These rivers, averaging a half-mile in width, and very rapid, form a distinct boundary line, and, as such, have been adopted as the Jordan of these red denizens of the northern world. This region of spirits, mystery, minerals, or fur, whichever we may call it, was now to be explored for the first time, and Jack was greatly surprised when the subject was broached to him.

"What do you think of it?" said Mr. Paterson, after a careful introduction of the subject, and an explanation of his wishes.

"It is just as you say, sir," answered Jack in his usual manly way. "I can take a reckoning, and know enough of minerals to have an idea of them in their natural state. I spent a winter session over them at Toronto University College. Of course, I can't say that I am a reliable prospector."

"No, I quite understand that, Jack," remarked his chief. "What I want is data for a subsequent exploration of the minerals, while you can take note of the physical features of the country, and, of course, estimate the possibilities of fur as well."

"When would you like me to go in?"

"The beginning of June."

"That's a long way off yet, sir," said Jack.

"Yes; of course I don't wish you to go before the snow disappears," said Mr. Paterson. "But in this part of Canada we prepare a long time before for any expedition we intend undertaking. Preparation is half the battle."

Mr. Paterson's voice and manner were unusually pleasant and cheery, and went a long way in reconciling Jack to the difficulties of the task that kept looming up before him with almost overwhelming fearfulness—not, be it understood, on account of any personal fear (for Jack was no coward), but by reason of the scientific requirements of an exploration such as was contemplated.

Then, too, there was the difficulty of directing and handling the men. Still, he hoped by that time to have acquired the art of management from watching Mr. Paterson and getting his advice. Moreover, he placed great reliance on the quiet sagacity of Mowat, who united in himself all the good qualities of the Scotch and Indian characters, with apparently none of the bad. If he could discover coal, not only his but everybody else's fortune was from that moment made. Then there was corundum, and perhaps, but not likely, placer and quartz gold. As all these thoughts ran through his brain, he felt a throb of excitement at the prospect before him, and was almost sorry that it was not already June. The name, too, and reputation of an explorer awaited a successful outcome of his expedition. His ambition was roused. The love of fame has been called by one of the greatest of poets "the last infirmity of noble minds," and certainly if a mind be noble—noble in its aims, and not mean in its motives—ambition, instead of producing baneful results, as too often happens, is productive of results beneficial in the highest degree to humanity at large. Under such conditions, money is no real part of the object. It is this freedom

from sordidness, from the horrid taint of money, that places poets, painters, scientists, and the like, so far above the mere man of commerce. He, it is true, may redeem his name and his trade by the bounty of his hand and the munificence of his gifts, in which event money becomes the handmaid of art and the blessing of the poor. If a rich man cannot discover an anti-toxin for diphtheria or small-pox, or a Listerian system of antiseptics, which have been blessings to mankind quite beyond the limits of calculation, he can, at least, provide the materials of experiment and the wherewithal for the discoverer. Most men aspire to die leaving a good and, if possible, a great name behind them; but to be truly great, to have fulfilled all their duties to the world, and to have shown the sublimity of a great manhood, they must have thought no more of money than of a cup of cold water—as a means, a necessity; but as an end, beneath contempt. Some thoughts such as these, we say, did run through Jack's mind at the prospect of handing his name down to posterity as the explorer of a hitherto undiscovered region, as large as England in extent.

Chapter VI.

GALA DAYS AT THE FORT.

CHRISTMAS was now at hand. Ah! the good people of Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, and Winnipeg, how little they know what Christmas is in the far-off isolation of the sub-arctic zone, two thousand five hundred miles from home, with an impassable barrier of ice and snow. And this is ice and snow—ice five or six feet thick, and snow to the same depth on the level. In the mountains, all passes are filled to the brim, and woe to the poor traveller who makes a misstep. The broad, flat snow-shoes of the Eskimos cannot save him. It is a great undertaking, too, for the officers of the minor posts to get to the headquarters at Fort Hope for the merry season, which is the one bright smile in a long, lonely year spent amid scenes of illimitable grandeur, but "far from the haunts of men." In London, the Londoner then sees his pantomime, the gaudy shops, and the happy faces. In Labrador, the white man sees happy faces too—those of the white people (happy enough, though tinged with the sadness of exile), and those of natives enjoying the Company's bounty. Picture to yourself, gentle reader, the post of Fort Hope, shut in by mountains of

snow, intersected by various and treacherous passes, and almost hidden from view, the curling smoke rising from half a dozen chimneys to testify to the life within, but all nature without clad in the mantle of the dead, and you have the external aspect of Fort Hope as it would appear to you if you stood at the river's edge. But within there is another tale to tell. Everything has been made ready for good cheer. Fair hands have decorated the walls of all the houses, so that none may be without, and men and master alike feel that some unusually happy event is at hand. The various delicacies of the kitchen have been made. Huge crocks of mincemeat tell of long rows of pies. Sauces and jellies for the game make a piquant addition to the mainstays of the table. The men are sitting in the big sitting-room of their own house discussing the past and future of the hunting season, and puffing long, slow, curling volumes of smoke into the already smoke-laden air of the room. A heavy step is heard, a stamping sound, as of one shaking the snow from his legs and feet. The door is opened.

"Hullo!" shouted M'Diarmid in astonishment. "In the name o' the deil o' Wolf's Crag, where did ye come from? Tak' off your duds, and sit down by the fire, while we tell that black wretch to get ye somethin' to eat."

The man thus warmly welcomed by the usually stolid but occasionally excitable Scot was a little below the medium height, but very broad and heavy, and was considered amongst those who had seen him try his strength a perfect Hercules. He had been known to take a two

hundred pound sack of flour in one hand and shoulder it, and he more than once had taken a man of medium weight, by catching him under the elbows, and lifted him about as one would a chair. Amongst the Eskimos he was known by the name of Nanoak—meaning the “polar bear;” for though he was not so tall as that huge monster of the ice-fields of the north when erect, he seemed to them hardly less strong, and it was related of him by them that on one occasion he took a young and full-grown bear by the jaws, and by a sudden twist killed him. This, of course, was highly improbable, and, no doubt, would not have been confirmed by Nanoak himself.

“Thank you, Mac. It’s beastly cold. The mountains are very full for this time of year,” answered Nanoak, shaking himself clear of his outer garments.

“How are the wolves?” continued M’Diarmid suggestively.

“Wolves all the way from James River,” said he, laughing. “I’ve ten skins with me.”

“Why, what have ye done? Is the deil wi’ ye that them imps of darkness canna tak’ hold of ye with their long teeth? Ugh! I hate the sound of their voices. Confound them!” and M’Diarmid gave a savage stamp on the floor as he remembered his narrow escape of a year ago. “But what is it ye have to hold them off, Nanoak? D’ye catch them by the wizen?”

The reader may wonder a little at this pleasantry, in which Morrison also joined, about so common though savage an animal as the wolf. But the reason of it all

was that Nanoak was known west of George River as "the wolf-hunter," from his extraordinary success in hunting these suspicious but at times terrible animals. Those who have read tales of the traveller in Russia will know how to appreciate this reference to the most uncanny of all things upon the face of the earth, the hyena alone excepted. Nanoak, by which musical name we shall continue to call him, was a Canadian adventurer who, some twelve years before, had gone north with a party of explorers, and seeing a chance of making money, and having a natural craving for the life of a hunter and trapper, had remained. During the twelve years of his career, he had become a true son of the far north, and, though not a free-trader, since he did not trade with the Eskimos or the Indians, but with the Company, he was a free-lance, not attached to anything of either a business or sentimental nature. His own trading was done chiefly at the George River and Whale River posts, so that Fort Hope saw him but seldom, though its occupants occasionally met him in their hunting trips. The only feature remaining to be mentioned concerning him is that he had a peculiar way of growing thin or fat. One day he would apparently weigh two hundred and thirty or two hundred and forty pounds, and the next you would say, perhaps, he was not more than two hundred. However, as the same people scarcely ever met him two days in succession, this physical peculiarity was not often referred to, and the less often, probably, because he resented any such familiarities.

"You've brought in ten?" echoed Morrison again. "I'd

go out now this very minute and come back in a fortnight a rich man if I could fight the thievin' brutes the way you can. The master says that he had a narrow escape the day afore yesterday. They're howlin' across the river now," and as he ceased speaking a long, solitary howl came floating to their ears.

"D'ye hear them?" exclaimed M'Diarmid.

"Never mind them, for Heaven's sake," said Morrison to his hunting mate. "Let's hear something of Nanoak's doings, and get him a cup of coffee."

"I've ordered it already," replied M'Diarmid, who went to the door and called.

"Yes, massa," said Sambo. "I'se comin'. De watah was dat obstint it wouldn't boil nohow."

But it was piping hot at last, and the wolf-hunter enjoyed his cup of coffee thoroughly.

"Yo see," began Nanoak, now thoroughly thawed out, "I came by way of Devil's Peak this time, hoping to get a fox. But I didn't get one, for the wolves had been before me, and it was a pity to see the black hairs on the snow and a few bits of bones near by. I met old Tigerface, the Nauscopee chief, and I think he must be on the war-path, though he pretended not to be. I tried to warn the Eskimos, but didn't meet any. He asked me if I was going to the fort, and when I said 'yes' he asked me to tell the master that they had two silver fox-skins for him. He'll be along for the Christmas good cheer if he's coming at all, or if he has no luck with the Eskimos. The Eskimos are worth all these Nauscopees ten times

over. I have a good mind to go down the river. The snow is quite hard, and we can make good time. If we happened to see a Huskie we might save many scalps. Will you come?

"But you'll be back for the games?" said M'Diarmid.

"Yes; when are they?" inquired Nanoak.

"A week from to-morrow, if the Huskies get up."

Morrison was soon ready, having put on his snowshoes and fur cap, and having stowed away enough jerked deer-meat to keep them both going till they should get back. But they could have made the two days' journey to the mouth of the river and back without any food at all, if necessary, so used are these hunters to scarcity and so good is their physical stamina. Fortunately, there was no sign of Indians going through when they set out, and they hoped for a speedy and lucky journey.

"There's more snow this year than last, Alec," remarked Nanoak to his companion.

"Yes; it's the first time I ever saw the gully back of Eagle's Creek full to the top," replied the latter.

"And I think it means more than a mere heap of snow."

"What?" asked Morrison sententiously.

"It means, to my thinking, that wolves will drive the fur away to where there's less snow," began the wolf-hunter.

"Ye-es," assented Morrison, who knew that himself.

"And it means the Indians will come farther east, and

when the Eskimos find the increased value of pelts and fish they'll come west, and then the old war will begin again. It's begun already, I think," and Nanoak looked for confirmation of his opinion by the elder hunter.

"Ye're right, Nanoak. I'm afeard of it. And look at the damage to trade. Drat the copper-coloured thieves! I wish they'd stay on the Great Whale and not come here to trade at all. They think more of scalps than they do of fur. I don't see why the master feeds the wretches."

"There's a deer, Alec; pop him," exclaimed Nanoak.

"It's yours," said Morrison.

"Well, let him have it."

The old Orkneyman put his rifle to his shoulder; there was a puff, and the deer fell. When they had bled it, Nanoak took the buck on his shoulders and walked off with it, as if it were merely a sack of oatmeal. The first tree of the required height and slender growth which they came to Nanoak put his foot against and bent over, while Morrison fastened the deer to it; and Nanoak gradually relaxing his hold, the deer swung high out of reach. When they reached to within ten miles of the mouth of the river, they came to open water, and presently sighted a Huskie rounding a point of ice in his swift-moving kayak.

"Takko!" shouted Nanoak, being Eskimo for "Look here!"

The Huskie hove to, and knowing the speaker, drew near.

"Igbit o'huck tuck hipunga enuk adelido tamanni," continued Nanoak. (Tell your friends that Indians have gone east.)

"Enuks allunattik igloe sinik mukok," replied the Huskie. (Will be at the post when we sleep twice, or in two days.)

"Oh," said Nanoak, turning to his companion, "they will all be at the post in two days. Well and good. The redskins will find that out and return. They will all be in for the games."

They then returned to the post, and Morrison told Mr. Paterson what they had heard. He accordingly directed Jack Ralston to prepare for the annual tournament. Jack was to be director of ceremonies or referee, it being *infra dig.* for the master himself to take any part except in the administration of justice and superintendence of the post.

The Eskimos soon began to arrive in small detachments, and the trading was very brisk at the fort for the next two days. The sounds of jubilation became continuous and loud. Snow-houses were run up with incredible speed, and in a short time the large space between the post and the river contained, in addition to the scattered huts usually there, a regulation Eskimo village full of happy-faced men, women, and children. These people are amongst the finest of the uncivilized races of the world, and Jack could readily understand how the herculean trapper came to rejoice in his adopted name. The Indians suddenly came in through the mountains on the west, Tigerface at the head. Having missed their enemies, he and his braves had made a detour to come in with the main body, no doubt to give the idea to the Eskimos and the people at the fort that they had come fresh from the far west, and had

no guile in their hearts. It has always been the aim of the Hudson Bay Company to heal up the differences between these two races, but the Eskimos' distrust of their dusky and hereditary enemies is well founded, whilst the latter have the lust of strife born in them. As a consequence, these efforts have met with little success, though still maintained.

The day came for beginning the games.

A space of about half an acre of snow was trampled flat by the natives, under the direction of Jack Ralston, and the list of events read out. The rivalry of Indians and Eskimos bade fair to be keener than usual. They were ranged on opposite sides of the open space, and took their positions preparatory to the opening of the contests, ready to cheer on their respective champions. The Eskimos proceeded to select their various champions by trial, under the guidance and direction of one of their oldest men, who had been in his day a renowned representative of the athletic prowess of his tribe. The chief event of the tournament was the far-famed wrestling contest, in which strength and endurance play the deciding part, since tripping or locks, as we know them, are not allowed in this northern style of laying your opponent prone. Each wrestler seizes his adversary in any way he pleases, so long as it is above the waist, and then they revolve in a circle as we have seen children do when playing "Ring-around-a-Rosy," or when grown-up people dance the old-fashioned galop. The revolutions rapidly increase in speed till the contestants are whirling madly. It is during this exhausting exercise that each tries to

throw the other to the ground by strength of arm alone. The real Eskimo champion in this style of wrestling was not present on this occasion, having had his leg injured by a blow from the claw of a polar bear, which compelled him to remain at home; and as a consequence, the Eskimos were dubious of their chances of success, especially in view of the strong representation of Nauscopees and Muskegons, which included all their best men. Amongst the Indians the manner of selection was quite different from that of the Eskimos, being left to the discretion of the chief, who ascertained beforehand who the best men were. This sagacious method enabled their champions to enter the finals fresh, while the Eskimos were to a certain extent exhausted by their previous efforts of the same day. We say to a certain extent, for the stay or stamina of these people is wonderful, due no doubt to the conditions under which they live. Though not so swift of foot or so agile as their rivals, the Eskimos are as a rule heavier and stronger.

The preliminary wrestling trials of the Eskimos resulted in the selection of Ahigi, a man of considerable dexterity, but not of the strength of Ualick, the champion whom they had been compelled to leave at home. Meanwhile the Indians had won the contest of putting the wrists down, the elbows resting in a manner somewhat similar to that in vogue amongst white people; and at twisting the little finger, in which each contestant tries to break that member, or if possible to make the owner cry "quits." Football, a game introduced by the people of the post, was next

indulged in, men, women, and children all joining in. At this, as was expected, the Indians won. Their greater quickness of foot stood them in good stead. Then came the chief business of the day. The discomfiture of the Eskimos, who had won nearly everything for the preceding two years, had roused the Indians to a high pitch of excitement, their shrill war-whoops answering each other in quick succession.

Ahigi, the Eskimo, was a strong man above the middle size, but evidently lacking in that quickness of movement requisite for the present undertaking, nor did he possess extraordinary strength to make up for it. The round, oily faces of the usually happy Huskies wore a troubled expression. How they wished for some of their men who were absent, especially Ualick! But they did not funk the trial on that account, and Ahigi stepped forth resolutely at the announcement of the bout by the referee. The Indian representative was an exceptionally fine specimen of his race, tall, sinewy, cat-like, and confident, whilst a malicious smile played about his lips. As they circled about each other, looking for an opening, the onlookers on both sides held their breath. Not a sound disturbed the winter stillness of the scene. At last the Indian descried a chance for a hold, and shooting forward like an arrow he seized the Eskimo round the body under the armpits. In an instant they were whirling round like a gigantic top, the cries of the spectators gradually swelling from the first onset till they now amounted to a series of wild, hysterical shrieks, the shrill voices of the women rising at intervals above those of the

men. The Eskimo champion soon began to show signs of exhaustion, being unable to release himself from the Indian's grip or to stop the whirl which he was executing involuntarily and at so much disadvantage. Suddenly the whirl ceased, and by a mighty effort the young Indian sent his adversary sprawling on the plain of snow. Wild and wilder grew the war-whoops of the Indians, who placed the victor in the centre and began a war-dance there and then. In addition to their disappointment, the Eskimos now became somewhat apprehensive, as a war-dance at such a time could have no meaning except one. A dog too had been stoned to death that morning by the Nauscopees, who had evidently discerned a good omen. Hark! There is another shout. This time it is the war-cry of the Eskimos. Nanoak has come down from the fort in his Eskimo dress. There can be no mistaking his intention. He strides quietly into the open space and throws off his ovinuck or shirt. His mighty chest and shoulders look like the heart of yonder mountain, and a look of anger flashes in his eye. "Will the chief meet me?" he asks. There is a moment's silence like death. The Indians then begin to protest, and Tigerface makes a long speech to the referee, who waits patiently for him to finish.

"Why will the white man become a Huskie? They have no quarrel with him. They do not want him to interfere. He cannot be a Huskie."

Such was the tenor of the protest of Tigerface.

"I am an Eskimo," shouted Nanoak defiantly. "I take the place of Ualick, who would have thrown yonder marten

without the whirl. The Indians triumph too much. Besides, they dance the war-dance, and have lately gone east over the mountains."

Loud shouts of approval and astonishment followed this announcement on the part of the Eskimos, while the Indians stood sullenly in consultation. At last Tigerface came forward again.

"Kenaqui will wrestle you, and he will throw the white Huskie," said he haughtily; whereat the Indians laughed, evidently with the hope of irritating Nanoak and rendering him rash.

The Indian advanced, and Nanoak without a moment's pause hugged his elbows to his sides and made straight for him. The latter backed away, but at a murmur from the crowd he darted forward like a bird upon the wing, and attempted to secure a strangle hold, contrary to the rules of wrestling. A loud shout follows this attempt, and the Indians close round. Fearful of treachery, Jack drives them back with threats. The struggle is brief. In another instant, with a mighty swing, the feet of the Indian fly high in the air; Nanoak breaks his arms asunder, and throws him like a dead dog full ten yards away. The Eskimos raise a joyful shout and rush round their adopted champion, who smiles good-naturedly and slowly walks back to the fort. The Indian soon recovered from the shock of his fall, and, crestfallen, departed with the others to their camp under the mountain. They were silent and angry, while the shouts of the Eskimos still rang on the air. Tigerface paused for a moment as they

reached their wigwams, and turning toward the scene of the humiliation uttered a fearful threat of Indian vengeance. But it fell on ears already occupied with sounds of rejoicing.

"Well, Nanoak," said Jack, going into the men's eating-room for the purpose of inspecting the rations, "you did a good turn to our friends the Eskimos to-day."

"Not so bad," replied Nanoak deprecatingly.

"What think you of the Indian?" asked Jack.

"Bad!" said Nanoak emphatically. "He has a worse face than any native I ever saw. There is no coward about that man, and plenty of vengeance."

"You will need to keep your weather-eye open then," suggested Jack.

"Yes," drawled Nanoak, quite satisfied with the outlook.

"What had we better do about to-morrow?" continued Jack, desirous, if possible, of healing the breach and bringing the sports to a peaceful conclusion.

"There'll be no good done with the Nauscopees after this, in my opinion. They're in a bad mood, and have come a long way on an evil purpose," said Nanoak.

"Wait, Nanoak. Wait a minute till I see the master," and Jack went back to the officers' quarters.

Nanoak got up and looked out of the window, and then said to Morrison,—

"There's no good in the master trying improvement on the Nauscopees or the Muskegons, whatever other redskins may be like. They hate the whites, and despise the

Huskies, who, God knows, are the best in the north. This trouble has been brewing for a long time. It was foolish to give them guns."

Before he had finished, Jack re-entered.

"He's writing. I'll see him again," said he.

"Do you know the history of The Brown Bird, Mr. Ralston?" inquired Nanoak.

"No. What is it, Nanoak?" said Jack.

"She's the Eskimo woman who married the Indian. She's with them now. They beat her and use her like a dog. Last year the Eskimos threatened to rescue her by force. Look out for her now over her yet."

"Why do they beat her? Is her husband dead?" asked Jack.

"No, he's not dead. The Indians despise the Huskies, and they are angry at her for their number for marrying her. It's the only case of the kind on record."

"One would think she'd leave him," said Jack.

"One would indeed," replied Nanoak; "and I don't understand it. The Eskimos say she's the slave of an Indian devil, and can't get away."

"Humph! I'll tell the master what you say, and you know he has the greatest respect for your opinion, Nanoak. I hope you'll keep your eyes open, and lend us the aid of your brawny arm. It's a tower of strength to rely on.

The door closed, and Jack wended his way to the sitting-room, where Mrs. Paterson and Linda were sewing and discussing the events of the day.

"Ah, Jack," said Mrs. Paterson, looking up. "What do you think of Nanoak's siding with the Eskimos? I suppose it's well enough, and they needed it this year; but Nanoak is not an Eskimo, for all that."

"Do you side with the Indians, Mrs. Paterson?" asked Jack, laughing.

"No, indeed, I do not, but the Eskimos have won nearly every preceding year, and the Indians might have been allowed to take their opportunity for turning the tables."

"Yes, they might, of course," assented Jack, "but I suppose we couldn't very well prevent Nanoak from taking part if we had wanted to."

"That is true enough," said Mrs. Paterson, "yet I do not think that our partiality, so unblushingly shown, will do the trade any good. An Indian is very easily roused by unfairness."

"Well, mamma," exclaimed Linda, "daddy says the Indians are always unfair to the Eskimos."

"Yes, I know he does, my dear; but there have been occasions when the Eskimos have been unfair to the Indians, and I cannot help thinking that this is one of them. I'm always in favour of British fair-play," and Mrs. Paterson gave her head a little toss, by way of emphasis. "I like Nanoak. He seems to be a fine man, and you all say so; but a man may let his sympathy run away with his discretion sometimes."

"True, Mrs. Paterson," said Jack; "and then we know that the Indians of the west are just as honest as the Eskimos. Some Indians are good."

"Ha! Jack, my boy," exclaimed Mr. Paterson, entering. "Well, how did things go to-day?"

"Not very well, Mr. Paterson," said Jack. "The Indians are very bitter over Nanoak's defeat of their champion."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Paterson, half contemptuously. "They're angry, are they? Pray, why should they be angry if Nanoak chooses to call himself an Eskimo? I heard they were annoyed about it."

"That's just the point we've been discussing, my dear," said Mrs. Paterson. "It seemed to me that the Indians really did beat the Eskimos, and then Nanoak stepped in and threw the winner."

"Very well, my dear; that will about describe it, I think," said Mr. Paterson.—"Linda, how would you like to distribute the prizes to-morrow?"

"Then we should all enter the lists," cried Jack.

Linda blushed. "I shouldn't mind distributing the prizes to the people I know, but I am afraid of some of those wretched Indians. I never can get over my distrust of them. I saw the wrestler yesterday, and he seemed to have such a frightful look, I am sure I couldn't give him a prize."

"Very well, my love; you shall only present the white prizes," said her father, stroking her golden hair affectionately.

"Then," said Jack, "I'd better notify the men of the shooting-match. Morrison, M'Diarmid, Pilo, and Mowat will all enter, and perhaps Nanoak."

"There it is," cried Mrs. Paterson: "you now call Nanoak a white man. A minute ago he was an Eskimo."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Paterson. "How do you intend to get out of that?"

"Mrs. Paterson is quite right, sir," said Jack, with a knightly bow. "We must exclude the 'polar bear.' Do you think we may go on with the games to-morrow?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Paterson, "by all means; but I would have the rifle-shooting first, and the running last. It will prevent any rash act by a stupid or excitable Nauscopee."

Jack retired with his instructions—not before, however, he had contrived to catch sight of the sweet face of Linda Paterson, who rewarded him with a pleasant smile.

He proceeded to the men's room, and rejoined them.

"Nanoak, you are barred to-morrow," said Jack, introducing the subject as pleasantly as possible. "There are to be four prizes—two for the natives, and two for the whites. Miss Paterson presents the shooting prizes for us.—M'Diarmid, what think you of that?"

"It is verra good of the pretty lass," said M'Diarmid; "but what class does Nanoak here shoot in?"

"He's Eskimo," said Jack, laughing. "He will have to shoot for them if he shoots at all."

Nanoak was suddenly ablaze with anger, but strove to conceal it. Jack was very sorry to notice this; but he felt that common justice demanded that, having chosen to represent the Eskimos, he should abide with them. Had Jack known that Nanoak was in love with the master's daughter, and viewed his exclusion in the double

light of an insult and of an act of distinct separation from the class or rank in which she moved, lowering him to the condition of a servant, he might have made an effort to remedy the matter. Though love was a strong passion in Nanoak's heart, it was weak in comparison with his revengeful nature. He felt that he had been wronged, and when a man of his determined character is in that mood he is to be feared. To meditate revenge is the worst of crimes. It is the farthest from the spirit of Christian teaching. Jack could but hope that Nanoak would see that no insult was meant, and that he would let it all pass.

On the following day the Indians finished their trading at the post very early. They had very little to say—less than usual; but they wanted ammunition in trade for all of their remaining skins. It was evidently their intention to take their departure soon. Mr. Paterson handed out to Jack a very fine pair of snow-shoes as a prize for the running race, and a bright-barrelled rifle and a trap for the shooting match. Pilo and Jack measured off the distance for the race—one hundred yards on the frozen surface of the river—and also posted the targets, ranging from one to seven hundred yards. The Indians looked longingly at the rifle, and talked much in low, guttural tones. The jolly Eskimos prepared to redeem themselves for their failure of the preceding day, and practised sprinting bouts up and down river. The word was given summoning the riflemen to the competition, and a large number, both of Indians and Eskimos, responded. Nanoak did not appear,

saying that the Eskimos did not need his help any more, as they were more than a match for the braves of Tiger-face in shooting; but that in running he did not wish the Eskimos to win, for, as he said scornfully, "It better becomes the Nauscopees to run." The match for the natives took place first. The shooting was marvellous. Every competitor hit the bull's-eye so fairly at one hundred yards that it was impossible to distinguish between them. At two hundred yards, thirteen of the twenty-five hit the bull and went on to the next. Only bull's-eyes count amongst hunters. The Eskimos had eight of their number remaining at that range. At four hundred yards, four Eskimos and three Indians were left, and excitement was high. At the final range, one Indian and one Eskimo were left. They were to shoot till one missed the bull's-eye. Each fired, and both scored. But on the fourth trial the Indian failed, the Eskimo upholding the reputation of his countrymen to the end. The Eskimos were very happy, but not triumphant, as they had expected to win, and they were not too well pleased that their enemies should have succeeded in remaining to the last. The Indians said nothing. Most of them returned to their camp. The next event, the foot-race, was now called. One Indian alone deigned to enter. He was the picture of agility and nimbleness. It was quite apparent that the heavy Eskimos stood little chance, and so it proved. The Indian's long, quick, gliding strides soon put him in front, and he won easily. He took the snow-shoes, politely acknowledged the gift, but departed with a malicious chuckle. No

further events remained for the natives, and no hostile demonstration followed as the Indians all withdrew to their camp, and the Eskimos were left to amuse themselves, which they proceeded to do like a veritable happy family.

"Now, Jack," said Mr. Paterson, "let us have our turn. Call out the men."

Morrison, M'Diarmid, Pilo, Mowat, Jack Ralston, and Mr. Paterson brought forth their rifles in answer to the announcement of the master of ceremonies, who was, as before, Jack himself.

"Where's Nanoak?" asked Mr. Paterson.

"I don't know, sir," said Jack.—"Hi, Mowat, do you know where Nanoak is?"

"He's gone, sir," replied the latter.

"Gone, has he?" said Mr. Paterson in astonishment. "I wonder what made him go off before the shooting."

Jack made no reply, and Mr. Paterson thought, of course, that he did not know. It was wrong of Jack to do this, no matter what he thought of the necessity or otherwise of explaining.

"It's only a huff," thought Jack, "and if I say nothing about it, it will all pass over, and the next time Nanoak comes he will be just the same as ever. Besides, I don't want to bring Mrs. Paterson into this affair; and to tell the truth, I didn't display much sense myself in telling Nanoak what had passed; and, moreover, Mr. Paterson might be very angry if he found out that I had barred Nanoak from the competition without his knowledge."

Here was a crucial test of a man's character. Jack did not do as we might have expected of him. Candour is the birthmark of the true gentleman, and the prime essential of a Christian. The last remark of Mr. Paterson kept ringing in his ears—"I wonder what made him go off before the shooting." It unsteadied his mind, and he could not give that direct attention to his shooting that otherwise he could have done.

"Come, Jack!" cried Mr. Paterson in a way more than usually jovial, intended to add pleasantry to the rivalry never absent from such an interesting occasion.

"Show me target No. 1, and I will open the ball;" whereupon he laughed merrily at the unintentional pun.

Bang! Linda looked inquiringly from the target to her father's face.

"You've hit it, sir," said Jack quietly. "It's an inner. There goes Sambo's hand."

"Well done, papa!" cried Linda gleefully.

"Well, that's not so bad. I suppose I cannot do better without practice."

"What have you hit, Charles?" asked Mrs. Paterson.

"The target, my dear, and not a half-bad shot for an old man.—Now, Jack, it's your turn; and see that you don't beat your senior officer," said Mr. Paterson, laughing.

Jack brought his rifle to the shoulder and fired. There was an awkward pause. Sambo's hand went up twice.

"Good for you, Jack; it's a magpie. You've obeyed my orders."

But Jack blushed deeply. He had earned a fine repu-

tation as a shot, and now had come near to missing the target. His mortification was extreme. He took a casual look at the breech to see if anything was wrong, and then stepped back. Mrs. Paterson and Linda, seeing his extreme chagrin, said nothing.

"Now, Morrison," said Mr. Paterson, considerably relieving Jack of his duty as announcer until he should recover countenance.

Morrison took his position and careful aim, and hit the bull well in the middle. At a sign from the master, M'Diarmid came forward. He put his bullet within but near the edge of the eye. Then came Mowat's turn, and the gentle-faced half-breed hit the mark fairly in the centre, to his and Linda's great delight; for she was very fond of Mowat, he was so kind to her. Pilo did well, but did not do himself justice, and was compelled to retire, not having hit the bull's-eye. At five hundred yards the Orkneyman lost his reckoning, and had to content himself with an outer. This left the Scotsman and the half-breed to finish. At six hundred yards both qualified, and at seven hundred also; but as Jack Ralston had not placed any targets beyond this, they agreed to shoot again. This time the Scotsman fell to an inner, whilst the half-breed repeated his former successes. Linda was delighted, and running forward shook Mowat's hand warmly, praising his magnificent shooting, and herself bringing him up to get the prize—a fine buckskin shirt, and a bountiful supply of tobacco, to which was attached a strong, serviceable pipe.

"Dat was good shootin'," cried Sambo, coming up to the group, which had quite forgotten him in the excitement. "Dat Mowat he kill a coon every time. Dem bullets of his'n struck de target like brickbats in melon time.—By gosh! Massa Mowat, you's good shot as me."

Mowat smiled at this confidential communication.

"Dis niggah must get de dinnah, aw de mastah'll be givin' him a whack wid de butt instead of de muzzle of dese yere guns. By golly, Massa Paterson he hab not gib dis niggah no prize for makin' his shot on de target. I'll shoot de hole bilin' wid a bonearrow," concluded the son of Dixie, as he hastened to the kitchen to get the dinner ready.

Chapter VII.

ATTACKED BY WOLVES.

CHRISTMAS Day in the arctics is Christmas Day indeed. All the night previous, the day had been heralded by an aurora such as defies the language of tongue or pen, and the occasional thunder-cracks of the ice-bound river would have suggested fireworks, if it were not absurd to compare this northern blaze of lights to any work, no matter how ingenious, of the hand of man. Sometimes, the whole sky was one shooting, quivering mass of red, and yellow, and pink, with every gradation of shade between, giving to the mantle of snow beneath the same shades, until it would seem as if the veritable end of the world were at hand, and that on the morrow the heavens would open and the trumpet of Gabriel sound. Far into the night had the watchers at the fort kept watch of these ever-changing wonders of sky and earth, but tired nature had at last asserted itself, and one and all had been compelled to seek their needed repose.

"My dear mother," cried Linda, as she came into her mother's room on Christmas morning to wish her father and mother a merry Christmas, "was there ever anything

so splendid? I slept—I must have slept, for I feel so refreshed; but my eyes and ears are filled with the strangest sounds and sights imaginable. I feel as if I had been on the top of some great mountain, from which I could see the whole world. I don't think we can ever be lonely here with such splendid sights; do you mamma?"

"No, dear. It was like fairyland. Sambo has been out for at least two hours amongst the dogs. What a noise they make!"

The morning was quite resplendent, although the sunlight was not very bright. The excitement of the recent tournament had rather increased than diminished by lapse of time. The men, having received their holidays, had plenty of time to sit round the fire and talk of it. Sambo was hurrying to and fro getting everything ready for dinner. The whole room was filled with smoke and steam from the kitchen, while delicious odours of goose and plum-pudding added their pleasant and pungent smell to that of tobacco. Although the men had nothing to do, as we have said, yet people accustomed to work find no real pleasure in continuing in idleness, when it is mere indolence, and not needed rest. M'Diarmid took in hand the hull of a ship that was to be, when completed, a model of the little schooner that belonged to the fort. Mowat was using a long thin-bladed knife with much quickness and dexterity. He was putting the finishing touches to a match-box.

"Who dat match-box foh, Massa Mowat?" inquired Sambo, pausing in his mad career from the cupboard to the stove

with a pan of flour. "Foh Mith Linda, eh? No? De mastah! Ah! golly, you might tell."

Mowat smiled quietly, but said nothing. Sambo went on his way. His curiosity was aroused, and it was his besetting sin. Presently he came back and sat down beside the half-breed, looking at his work as the latter skilfully cut off just so much here and there, or delicately wound the thin blade-point in and out of the sinuous curves on the top of the match-box.

"My golly!" said Sambo in ecstasy, "dat's de fines ting I ever seen. Who's goin' to be foh, Massa Mowat? Oh! go on."

"Why in thunder don't ye go back to your puddin', ye black rascal!" exclaimed M'Diarmid angrily.

The roar of the pot was prophetic of explosions and a ruined pudding. But still the negro held his place. M'Diarmid cast an angry glance at him; seeing which, Mowat folded up his knife and handed the box to Sambo.

"There you are," said he; "that's your Christmas-box."

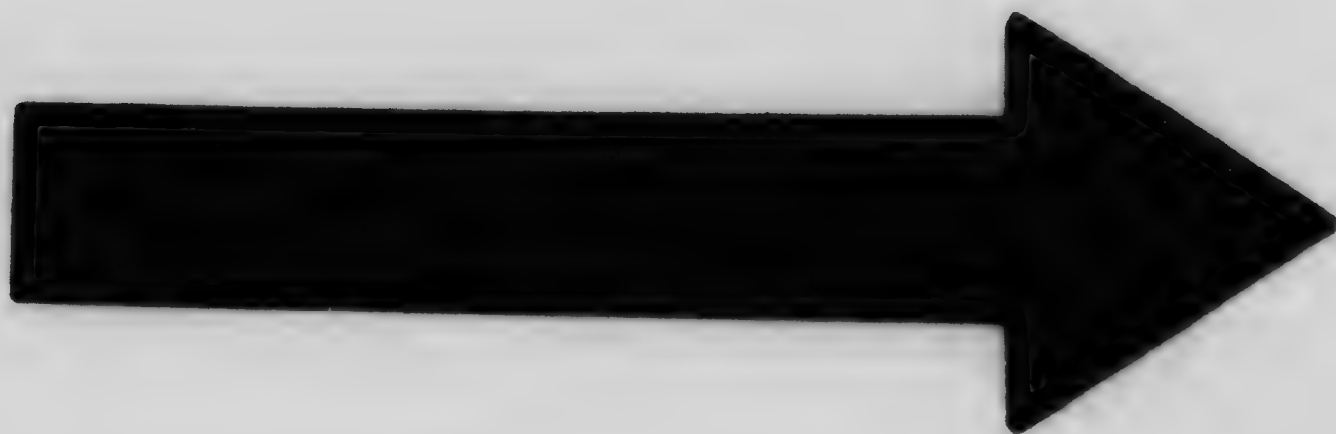
M'Diarmid looked surprised and somewhat disappointed, having had an idea that the box might have gone his way. The negro's delight was excessive.

"By de golly gosh, dis yere niggah's de boy foh me. Whoop-la! Hooray foh Massa Mowat, and hooray foh de puddin'! Hooray foh Massa M'Diarmid."

"Shut up, ye doted idiot, or I'll slit yer wizen for ye," shouted M'Diarmid in a great rage.

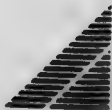
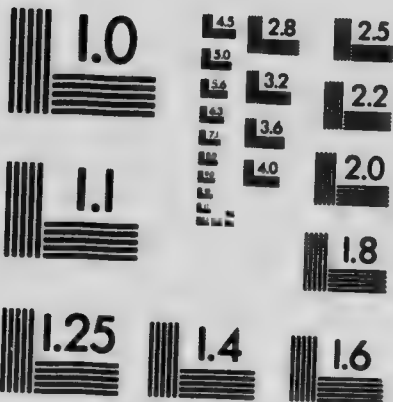
"Oh! Massa Scotchman, wat you—"

Before the negro could finish his remarks, the Scotsman



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had made a swing at him with his left hand ; but the negro cleverly ducking it, M'Diarmid fell off the nail-keg upon the floor. Sambo roared with delight, and waited just long enough for M'Diarmid to rise, when he vanished from the scene, to reappear, however, in a few minutes to attend to his cooking, as if nothing had happened. Such encounters were not infrequent, but they usually ended, as this one did, in smoke, although sometimes the negro got a whack from Morrison, who was quicker with both hands and feet than M'Diarmid. However, as Sambo was a stocky, strongly-built Ethiopian, it was doubtful if his head or back felt worse after a blow than Morrison's hand.

The door opened, and the men looked up to see Jack Ralston enter somewhat hurriedly.

"Has any one seen anything of Mr. Coleridge?" he inquired.

They answered in the negative.

"The master is very anxious about him. He ought to have been here at the latest by one o'clock this morning. Mowat, run down and ask the Eskimos if any of the late arrivals from the coast have crossed his track ; and you, Pilo, see what the Indians say. I think some of them are up there yet."

The men spoken to put on their caps and darted off. Jack went out to the front of the fort and scanned the landscape, but no one appeared. Presently Pilo returned.

"What do the Indians say, Pilo?" inquired Jack hastily.

"Noting, monsieur. Dere no Indians dere. Everything gone," said the voyageur.

"That's bad!" exclaimed Jack, becoming more and more perplexed. "Wait here, Pilo, till Mowat gets back. I see him coming now."

The latter was then visible in the distance, coming rapidly along the pathway.

"No sign of him, sir," said Mowat, in answer to Jack's questioning look.

"This is very unfortunate, Mowat. Get the dogs out at once. I will take a dash out to meet him. Perchance we may find that he has lost a dog or two, and has been kept back by the loss."

Mowat hurried away and called the dogs. In response to a long, peculiar cry, that though not very loud had a remarkable carrying power, seven dogs came galloping into the enclosure. Before a minute had elapsed their harness was thrown over them, and their traces fastened to the comatic. Then Jack grasped his dog-whip, and Mowat, with his rifle, jumped on behind; and amid the crackling of the whip, and the shouts of Jack calling "Sport," "Dash," and the various names of the others, they went flying over the snow in quest of the second officer.

"It's a pity, Mowat, that we can't find some point of view from which we could watch the trail, even if only at intervals," observed Jack.

"We can, sir. If Mr. Coleridge has not passed the Crow's Nest, we can stop at the bend round the mountain, and climb up over the ledge. It's not an easy climb, but it gives a view for five miles as far as the Black Wood," answered the half-breed.

"Very well, then; if we don't see tracks at the fork in the road, we'll stop."

The dogs flew over the frozen snow. Those who have never driven behind an Eskimo dog-team in full swing have little idea of their swiftness and endurance. A hundred miles between daylight and dark of a short winter day is no unusual feat for them to accomplish. As, upon a journey, the dogs are fed but once a day, and sometimes but once in two or even three days, no time is lost on that account. Obstacles are easily surmounted. Occasionally, the sled strikes a hummock of ice or a fallen branch; but a skilful driver springs off and rights it again, and on it goes almost without interruption, the team of dogs now spreading out, and then closing like a fan, and again going for a long distance in single file, as, attached to the sled by thongs of different lengths, they fall in one behind the other. Everything, however, may be said to depend upon the leader. His intelligence ordinarily is little less than human. All careless thoughts of lazy dogs, too, vanish at the crack of the ten-yards-long whip, which the driver uses with as much address as the bola-thrower his bola. Nor is this all done with merely light and easily-hauled loads. Often a thousand pounds weight, made up of "trade," dog-meat, and passengers, constitutes the load for a long journey through woods, over ice piled up by tide or storm, and along the edges of the mountains.

They had gone about four miles from the post when they heard a bark.

"Ha! what's that? That sounds like it," said Jack.

"It's a queer bark that," remarked Mowat dubiously.

Then came another and another, quick and sharp, and in a moment there appeared round the bend in the track three dog dragging a sled, and barking furiously at several gaunt-looking wolves that ran by their sides snapping at them. Quick as thought, Jack and Mowat took in the situation. Their rifles were unslung, and their dogs stopped before the others had come ten strides nearer. A quick succession of shots followed, and four of the wolves were stretched in the snow. The remaining two turned and fled. Coleridge's dogs halted when they came up to their comrades, and a ghastly sight met the eyes of Jack and the half-breed. Stretched on the comatic lay the apparently lifeless form of poor Coleridge, his face covered with blood. No time was lost in lifting him up, when it was found that he was not dead, but unconscious. Jack at once poured brandy down his throat. His heavy breathing bespoke a heavy stupor, and Jack held his head while the half-breed rapidly chafed his temples. Presently he opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked faintly.

"You're all right, Mr. Coleridge," exclaimed Jack, greatly relieved. "You came nearly faring pretty badly."

The half-breed's chafing now began to have increased effect, and Coleridge was able by an effort to sit up. His senses returned with his increasing strength. Jack then placed him on his own sled in charge of Mowat, and sent them on ahead, while he piled the carcasses of the wolves on the other sled, and with the three dogs slowly followed.

The entire population of the fort came out to meet them as soon as they were descried in the distance. Coleridge was quickly taken in hand by Mrs. Paterson, who had considerable skill as a surgical nurse. A hot drink of her famous "Eskimo cordial" put new life into the wounded traveller, who was found to have been bitten in both wrists and in the cheek, but not so deeply or seriously as might have been expected. His loss of consciousness had been due to an accidental blow received by falling suddenly backwards on the comatic when the dogs gave an unexpected bound. This, combined with the lassitude produced by the cold and by the fatigue of the chase by the wolves, had overcome him. When he was at last in shape and quite restored, he asked for his pipe, and drew near to the fire in the sitting-room. It was now almost dinner-time, but the clock was put back a few minutes to enable him to appease the curiosity of Mrs. Paterson and Linda.

"You see," he began, "when I left Whale River the night before last, I crossed to the Company's hut and hove to as usual for an early start in the morning. Unfortunately, James couldn't come, or all this wouldn't have happened. I started out at half-past six the next morning. The moon shining brightly and the roads being good, I made headway rapidly. As we drew near to the Reindeer Mountain, I concluded to put up in the cave for the night, as there were signs of an approaching storm, and it was much colder than when I started, and it was thirty-five degrees below then. The dogs were fed, and we all had a

fine sleep. I left there at a little after four this morning, and made good time up to about eleven o'clock, when the sky clouded over and a fine snow began to fall that almost obscured the dogs from my view. As we travelled on, I happened to look round, and I saw or thought I saw two Eskimo dogs not far behind. Then three more appeared. I said to myself, 'An Eskimo is travelling my way, and he must have good dogs.' It struck me as peculiar that they had spread out so widely, two being almost on one side of my comatic and two on the other. By this time my dogs were going at a tremendous pace and barking at intervals. Presently, to my horror, all doubts were set at rest as the supposed dogs passed me on either side and attacked my pack. I took up my rifle and fired. One of the wolves fell. But this did not seem to diminish the number, and I suspected that there must be a large number of them, in which event our chances were slim. I waited till a wolf was about to seize one of my team, when I fired again. He fell wounded with a fiendish half-snarl, half-howl that made my blood run a little sluggish. I had five cartridges in my magazine, which, as you know, is a twelve-shooter, thinking that enough for any game I might sight, and never thinking of wolves in daylight. Three more shots and the five cartridges were gone. I opened the butt, but had neglected to put any there. I groped for my belt, but I remembered having taken that off and put it in a bundle at my feet. I bent forward to look for this, and from that moment till I opened my eyes in Jack Ralston's arms I

remembered nothing. It was all a blank. How I escaped swinging off the sled is a mystery to me. My wounds are the work of one wolf, who made a determined effort to attack me from behind. I was watching those in front when I felt him on my back. I tried to strike him off, when he seized my wrist. I then struck at him with the other hand, when he snapped at that. Before he could do further damage, I had pulled my rifle round, and let him have it with the butt."

"A close shave," said Mr. Paterson, shaking his head.

"Rather, and next to Jack and Mowat I have to thank Mrs. Paterson and Linda for my being at the present moment safe and sound and as well as ever."

"Shall I have your dinner brought in here, Mr. Coleridge?" inquired Mrs. Paterson solicitously.

"Oh dear, no, thank you," replied Coleridge, laughing; "I am able for anything now. I wouldn't miss my Christmas dinner for all the wolves between this and the coast."

"Very well then. Come along," said Mrs. Paterson. "Sambo has announced it. Charles will take your arm."

She led the way with Linda into the dining-room, where Jack to his great delight found himself placed next to Linda Paterson.

Chapter VIII.

A TRAPPING EXPEDITION.

CHRISTMAS and the Christmas holidays were over. The men had enjoyed their ten days' respite from toil even more than usual, and Fort Hope justified its name by the brightness of its prospects for the new year.

"Now, Jack," said Mr. Paterson one fine morning after a heavy fall of snow, "don't you think this a favourable opportunity for a trapping expedition?"

"Unquestionably," answered Jack. "I am glad, sir, that your opinion is the same as mine."

"I wouldn't make it too long though," suggested the master. "Of course, you will take a man with you; but still it's better to make two expeditions than one. If one is unlucky the second is likely to be lucky."

Accordingly, Jack went over to the Eskimo village and secured a guide, who proved to be a nice young lad, quick and accurate, named Emack. Twelve dogs were harnessed and the sled loaded as follows:—Provisions for two for a fortnight, three hundred pounds of dog-meat, guns and ammunition, sleeping-bags, snow-knives, snow-shoes, cooking utensils, and thirty-five traps. The direction was

chosen, and they started off towards the upper waters of George River. The traps were set in likely places, from a mile to a mile and a half apart, as they went along.

A word must here be said of the extraordinary sagacity of the Eskimo dogs on these trips. It has no doubt been surprising to the reader that in a land of snow, where no roads mark the highways of commerce, men are able to move about with so much speed and certainty. This facility of locomotion is due almost entirely to the wonderful ability of the dogs in, as it were by intuition, becoming acquainted with the art of travelling and setting traps. Once having been at a trap, if they ever pass that way again, they will stop and wait for the driver to look it up, sometimes when he has quite forgotten or overlooked it himself. In order to enable himself to find his way in storm or shine, the hunter frequently resorts to the well-known method of blazing trees. Without appearing to notice this operation the dogs are well aware of it, and on the return journey, if they happen to go on the wrong side of a tree, the leader will look round the tree till he finds the mark, and then, if allowed to do so, will turn the pack back and go past it on the blazed side. Very rarely, too, is a traveller lost; for, in the event of his having lost track of the route, he simply lets the dogs have their heads, and they never fail. Such a thing in the untracked and extensive wilderness as a lost dog-team is unknown. Expeditions, especially those in quest of fur and game, set out usually in new directions each time, the hunters knowing only how far they intend to go, and the general plan

they intend to adopt ; but beyond this they are dependent upon the dogs, their own wonderfully developed powers of observation, and the stars. Such trips are usually merely rounds of setting traps, and then a revisit shortly after, accompanied by the diversion of living in snow-houses at night, and the killing of the animals found in the traps. Sometimes, however, tremendous storms, attacks of wolves, or breaking through the ice, with narrow escapes from drowning, vary the programme of this interesting and romantic calling.

At the end of the second day's work of setting traps, hiding them from view, and baiting them carefully with carrion seal-meat, Jack felt very tired, not only from the arduous nature of the employment, but also from the multitude of little worries attendant upon work to which he was new. The night was clear and the temperature a few degrees below zero. Emack collected a few branches of dry wood and lighted a fire, putting on the kettle. The dogs were given a few lumps of seal-meat to keep them quiet, their feeding-time not being, however, till the stop the next night, two meals a week being their allowance. Jack lay on the sled within reach of the warmth of the fire. While the water was getting ready to boil, Emack took out one of the long, broad-bladed snow-knives, and proceeded to cut the snow into large blocks for building the hut ; for although the weather was not cold enough to force them to seek a better shelter than their sleeping-bags, Jack was desirous of going through the experience, in order that he might learn the art of building so sure

a protection against severe weather. Emack cut a large number of these blocks in a very short time, and placing them like blocks of stone upon each other, the outer edge of each of the upper layers being a few inches farther in than those of each succeeding lower layer, he very soon had all but the key-stone in position. This was cut to fit the opening, and then wedged gently in, providing in this way the key-strength to the whole fabric. An opening had been left on one side as an entrance. Jack crawled in to have a look at it, and thought that anything warmer, stancher, and more suitable to the purpose could not well have been devised. "Truly the necessities of this northern climate have produced many interesting and useful inventions," thought he.

On the following morning, at the first peep of dawn, Jack set out to stalk a caribou the sled having crossed tracks of these animals the evening before. He took his glass and rifle, and climbing one of the highest of the numerous hills, brought a large range of country into his field of view. He had turned off about twenty degrees of a circle, when his eye caught sight of a herd of ten or twelve feeding quietly upon moss along the edge of the river. He knelt down at once, so that he might run no risk of being seen, and folded up his glass. The wind unfortunately blew, though very gently, still almost directly towards them. They were distant about three-quarters of a mile, which, added to the detour necessary, would make a total distance of about two miles to be traversed before getting within easy range. Jack crawled down to the foot

of the hill, and started quietly but quickly to make the circuit, being no longer in sight of the deer. In what appeared to him an incredibly long time he had covered the distance, and he then began his approach from the leeward side with great caution. He chose the route through a patch of wood, and then past several large boulders, from behind one of which he was at last rewarded by a fine view of his quarry. He drew his rifle and fired. A bull fell. The others looked up in the utmost bewilderment, as if unable to place the direction of the sound. As he leaned forward for the second shot, Jack saw the cause of their perplexity. The report of the shot had been no doubt echoed in a thousand ways from the boulders and surrounding hills, so that the deer had an idea that the sounds were coming from every direction. But at the second shot they caught sight of the smoke, and fled with remarkable swiftness into the valley along the lower edge of the frozen stream, and soon were out of sight. He waited for them to reappear. The river took a sudden turn round the mountain before being finally lost to view, and he kept his eyes glued to this spot, his rifle at the shoulder. Like a flash they reappeared flying along the surface of the stream, and as they came full in sight at the bend, he fired again, and then hurried down from his position. He found a splendid buck lying prostrate in the snow, his life-blood fast ebbing away from a wound in his side. Jack took out his knife and cut the last thread that bound this noble denizen of the wilderness to his forest home. It was utterly impossible for him to carry

even one half of the dead animal back to the camp, so without further consideration he proceeded to skin it. This done, he shouldered the pelt and returned to the spot where the other lay. Emack was tremendously pleased, and expressed his delight in the most extravagant terms.

"We hab luck wit trap sure," he said, as he rubbed his hands and chuckled with delight.

The dogs were driven to within a few paces of where the first deer lay, and the sled was loaded without difficulty. It was now noon, and Jack was anxious to make headway. He had gone about a hundred yards past the camp when Emack said to him,—

"You not tak' deer to fort?"

"What! now? Do you mean me to go back to the fort without setting all the traps? No, no, Emack," said Jack.

"Den to bury dem good ting," and the Eskimo smiled till his white teeth shone.

"What do you mean by burying them, Emack? If we hide them the wolves will get them," exclaimed Jack.

"Not if set trap."

"Oh! I see," said Jack, the truth of the sagacious Eskimo's advice dawning upon him. "You mean to bury them in the snow and set traps around them. Very well. Then we can go on?"

Emack nodded his head.

"All right. You do it, and I'll watch you," said Jack.

In a trice the carcass and the skin were dragged off

the sled and buried carefully in the snow, traps being set between the fore and hind legs, and at suitable intervals round about. These were all carefully baited and concealed, after which Emack and his master continued on their way. It took two days more of hard work to finish setting all the traps, after which they returned to the post by way of the buried deer, taking with them also a goodly bag of ptarmigan and partridge.

"Well done, Jack," cried Mr. Paterson, as Jack appeared with his team of panting dogs and Emack, smiling, before the entrance to the stockade, just at the dusk of a winter evening. "Two deer and—dear me! there must be thirty brace of partridge. Had you any luck with the traps?"

"We go back to-morrow, sir, over the circuit, and Emack says we are sure to have some. I hope he proves as right about that as he is about the other things he has to do with," said Jack.

"Ha! Emack, do you hear your master's praise? What do you think of that?" said Mr. Paterson, turning to the happy Eskimo.

"Him lucky hisself," said Emack.

"Well then, Jack, I expect you will come in with a silver fox and perhaps a black one, or at least a cross."

"Don't expect too much, I beg of you, sir. It's my first trip alone, and I may do well another day," said Jack deprecatingly.

A feeling of pride in his future filled the young man's heart as it had never done before, and he resolved that he

should not fail for lack of labour in meriting the approval of the Company, and perhaps, too, the regard of his master's daughter. As his mind's eye ran over his prospects he could not help wondering that anybody could consider a life such as this a lonely one, when all that one holds most dear shares it with him. Youth and love are truly the eternal fountains of happiness.

The next morning, bright and very early, Jack Ralston departed with Emack for a round of his traps. The day began badly for the trappers, the wind from the north-east being cold and cutting; but they did not find it so raw when they had gained the shelter of the mountains. The dogs, too, were a little out of humour, and snapped and bit at each other in a discouraging way. At the first trap there was nothing, and Jack began to think that luck was against him; but at the second, to his great joy, he found the chief reward of his labours for which the trapper looks—a fine silver fox. When he had killed it by stunning it, and then stood upon the body over the heart, as is the custom of the northern hunters, in order to keep the skin perfect, he proceeded to skin it. Emack's face was wreathed in smiles.

"Good luck to-day," said the Eskimo.

"Yes, Emack; we have had good luck to-day so far, and we have the other traps yet to visit," remarked his master proudly. But at the close of their day's journey they pitched camp without having added anything further to their store, excepting a wolf's paw, which its owner had gnawed off and left in the trap, rather than be taken.

Whether it was out of sympathy, or for some other equally good reason which Jack and the Eskimo lad could not divine, at any rate throughout the night there was no cessation of the howling of the wolves, who came so close to the snow-house that Jack had to call the dogs in lest they should be attacked. The next morning they set out along the river-bed or valley, to which reference has already been made. The view was particularly entrancing on this occasion, as the sky, being cloudless, presented a vivid picture of a deep, smooth sea. This beauty of the heavens shared its loveliness with the river, mountain, and forest below, producing an effect which was somewhat sombre but not the less striking, and a brighter sun would have paled the deep colour-glow that fringed the woods and rested upon the mountain top. A red fox and a marten completed the list of their successes in the traps; but a variety of tracks had been noticed which Emack said meant well for some future day. The return journey was made without incident and at a high rate of speed, the dogs having recovered their spirits.

"Well, Jack," said Mr. Paterson, "what luck this time?"

"A fox, sir," answered Jack.

"What! not a silver or black?"

"Yes, sir," said Jack, nodding and smiling; "a fine silver one."

"Good for you, my boy," cried the master, slapping him good-naturedly on the back, the resound of which drew Mrs. Paterson to the door.

"What do you think, mamma? Jack has secured a fine silver fox."

"A red one and a marten also, sir," said Jack, a little embarrassed, and desirous of turning the attention, now so painfully directed to himself, in some other quarter.

"Well, Jack," continued Mr. Paterson, "I suppose you'll turn this in and take your commission?"

"I should like to do something else with the fox, sir, if this and my other commissions amount to its value," replied Jack.

"Should you?" exclaimed Mr. Paterson, evidently disappointed. "Very well—we'll look it up; but I'd rather you'd take it in trade. Though, of course," he added, "do as you please."

Jack took his red fox and the marten to the storehouse, leaving the silver fox in his cleaning-room, where he afterwards carefully scraped, stretched, and dried it, and in a few days had it ready to present to Linda. So fine a present in the land of fur and snow was equal to a diamond necklace in southern latitudes, at the very least, and was also tantamount to a declaration of sincere attachment.

Chapter IX.

SAMBO'S GHOST.

THE Eskimo dog, to which we have incidentally referred before, used in all these northern countries as the universal sled dog, is a singular specimen of the canine species. In appearance he very nearly resembles the wolf, and rightly so, since he is partly wolf-bred. As a dog he is intelligent, extremely hardy, but savage. As a drawer of the comatic or sled he has no equal. When on a long journey a team travels easily a hundred miles a day, and is given food, as we have said, but twice a week, excepting the entrails of deer, as they are killed by the hunter.

When an expedition is undertaken, the dogs are harnessed to the sled, and, cracking his whip, away the hunter goes; but great care must be taken with them, for the hungry creatures know only nature's law, and if they can attack even their master unawares they will do so, and when the attack begins it is very hard to beat them off. If, in resisting, the hunter should fall, his doom is sealed. Then, too, madness occasionally seizes a member of the team, which has to be shot instantly, or all the disasters attendant upon an epidemic

of hydrophobia will follow. Their endurance and sagacity, however, are great. The most terrible blizzard has no terrors for them. They curl up in the snow together and lie dormant for days at a time, while their driver, in his sleeping-bag in his snow-house, passes the time in patiently waiting for the whirling winds to subside, to face which is certain death. When hunting, the hunter is frequently compelled to leave his sled when he comes to a herd of deer, in order to get a fair shot. The dogs, if left to themselves, naturally would incline to satisfy their hunger by taking a hand in the hunt. To allow them to do so would probably mean death in the wilderness to the hunter, if at the time he should chance to be a considerable distance from home. But the process adopted of retaining them, sanctioned though it be by long usage and, perhaps, necessity, is frightfully cruel. Though hungry, the dogs will not stop and feed upon a deer that is dead. The savage lust of rending is too strong for even hunger. So, in order to prevent their wandering, the hunter merely wounds the first deer he shoots, hitting it in the legs. As it falls with a broken limb, the dogs pounce upon it and finish it. Satisfied that he will find them over the remains when he returns, the hunter follows the tracks of the retreating herd. Nothing, of course, but the knowledge that this is a fact and a very painful though seemingly necessary one, would warrant its introduction into any narrative.

It is related of a ship's captain that, going ashore at one of the more southerly posts of Labrador, he noticed, while

ascending a high hill to reconnoitre, that the local team of dogs was following him. After ascending the hill, he stopped to look seaward, when the dogs stole up behind him and attacked him savagely. Had it not been that he had forgotten to lay off his belt containing his revolver, he, no doubt, would have speedily succumbed, being frightfully bitten as it was. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that the wolves would either effectually frighten or speedily kill off any dog less savage and wolf-like than the Eskimo.

The season had now arrived for the annual winter visit to "the hunters." These men are employees of the Company, and during the summer months are at the main post engaged in carpentering, boat-building, coopering, or repairing the stockade. Far out in the wilderness, and from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles apart, houses are built to contain one each of these men, his (usually native) wife and children, and supplies during the winter. Anything more lonely than this winter exile of the hunter and his family it is hardly possible to imagine; yet they like it, and are glad when the last sound of whip or tongue proclaims the departure of their guides and their own isolation for four months. Notwithstanding all the terrors of the literally howling wilderness by which they are surrounded, these hunters continue year after year to engage in this pursuit of game and fur. Instead of keeping them in idleness all winter, or comparatively so, at the fort, the Company places them in this way in these solitary posts, and gives them a large commission on

their winter's work. Every morning the solitary hunter visits his traps or tramps on his snow-shoes through woods, or over mountain, stream, and glen in quest of all sorts of foxes, martens, caribou, red deer, bear, wolves, wolverine, mink, otter, beaver, and fresh-water seals. In the hut, made of wood, and packed to make it warm, the "busy housewife" plies her daily care, and the children, if there be such, play about within easy reach, or drive some old toothless dog harnessed to a makeshift sled. This custom of dog-driving is carried to perfection throughout Canada, where, from Halifax to Vancouver, and from the land of the musk-ox in the north to the border on the south, dogs, big and little, old and young, and of every conceivable breed and variety, haul the sled.

It was evening at the fort, and Jack was enjoying himself in the society of Mrs. Paterson and Linda. The open fire tinged everybody and everything in the comfortably-furnished room with the warm, red glow of the blazing logs. Mrs. Paterson and Linda worked by the light of the tall lamp upon the table at intricate needlework, which it would be useless for us to attempt to describe. Let others who are better versed in these things enter into the mysteries of the single and double stitch twice crossed or intertwined. We are concerned with other things.

"What has become of Nanoak?" asked Mrs. Paterson, looking up from her work. The remark was directed to Jack.

"I don't know," replied Jack. "He has not been here since the games, and may have gone north to his beloved Eskimoes."

"How very fond he seems to be of the Eskimo character!" continued Mrs. Paterson. "It is largely due, no doubt, to their simplicity. Strong, fierce men as a rule cannot brook opposition, and the gentleness of the Eskimos suits him. Is he married?"

"They say not," said Jack. "It is a wonder he never took to himself an Eskimo wife."

"I fancy he's too proud for that. When do you propose taking that terrible journey into the unexplored region?"

"Not till summer, I think, Mrs. Paterson," said Jack. "Mr. Paterson seemed to mean that we should go when the rivers were unlocked."

"Oh! of course," laughed Mrs. Paterson. "I never thought of that. I am afraid I should make a poor sort of explorer.—How should you like to live in the lonely wilderness with nobody to talk to and no prospects of ever getting out, Linda?"

"I don't think I should mind it," replied Linda gaily. "It's not so bad, after all, if you are happy."

"Ha! ha! Linda," laughed Mrs. Paterson; "you are a true woman at logic. If you were happy, you say. That's the very question, isn't it? I asked you if you would be happy if living alone in the wilderness."

"Oh no, dear mother, I shouldn't care to go farther into the wilderness than this, but I have no desire to take up

with the gaieties of city life. I love this northern life. I suppose it depends a good deal on one's health though."

"What's all this metaphysics I hear?" exclaimed Mr. Paterson, entering the room. "Jack," said he, "I want you to visit the men. Will you go?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Jack. "What you wish I view as a command."

"Right, Jack," said Mr. Paterson; "that's the spirit of a soldier. You will get on in the service. Very well then. I shall expect you to go as soon as convenient."

"Who goes with me, sir?" inquired Jack.

"Any one you like—Pilo, Mowat, or any one of the men."

"Might I have Emack instead?" asked Jack.

"Certainly. But do you think him enough of a protector?"

"I need no protector, sir," said Jack, drawing himself up.

"Right again, Jack," said Mr. Paterson, smiling. "You're the right sort of stuff.—Well, my dear wife, how goes the knitting?"

"Knitting, my dear? You always think that Linda and I are knitting. Don't you know that knitting, though very useful in this climate, is not very entertaining? When we women want to entertain ourselves we sew."

"Oh! dear me," exclaimed Mr. Paterson, "what a mistake I've made!—You see, Jack, it doesn't do to talk about things one knows nothing about."

A knock was heard at the door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Paterson.

The abashed monarch of the wash-tub and cook-stove entered. His face was one large look of fright.

"Well, Sambo, what do you want?" inquired Mr. Paterson, to whom the darky's gaze was directed.

"Dere's someting in de kitchen, massa," exclaimed the negro in an almost breathless voice.

"Are you sure, Sambo? What do you think it is?"

"Spook!" was the solitary word the negro could find to express his opinion.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Paterson, half-angrily. "There are no spooks in the fort or anywhere else."

"Dere's one in de kitchen yard, massa, sure's dis niggah's a living chile."

Such an emphatic asseveration as this admitted of no contradiction, excepting the plain evidence of error. So all thought.

"I'll go, sir," volunteered Jack.

"We will all go," said Mr. Paterson.—"Come, my dear; you and Linda have never seen a spook, I'm sure. Come along."

But Mrs. Paterson firmly declined, and it is needless to say that Linda followed her mother's example; for no woman, it matters not how brave, can endure the thought, let alone the sight, of either a spook or a mouse. Mr. Paterson went first with a lantern, which Jack had hastened to procure. Jack followed with Sambo in the rear, his eyes staring wildly on every side. They reached the kitchen.

"Now, Sambo, where is your ghost? You didn't bring

us all the way out here for nothing, did you?" asked Mr. Paterson.

Sambo advanced cautiously from behind Jack and looked timidly round. Suddenly he gave vent to the most unearthly shrieks that mortal ever uttered. He pointed to the window. Sure enough a rapidly vanishing form flitted lightly over the snow, and then disappeared. M'Diarmid and Mowat came in from their house to see what was the matter. Mr. Paterson and Jack consulted as to what the apparition could be. In the midst of it Sambo gave another frightful yell, and exclaimed,—

"Lordy gosh! massa, dere's de spook—dere's de spook."

Sambo's terror was abject. The ghostly form approached nearer and nearer. It had come through the stockade or over it—the spectators could not tell which—as if the stockade or the ghost were made of the thinnest tissue paper. Suddenly it stopped. All eyes were upon it. Sambo was breathing like a grampus. It oscillated for a moment, steadied itself, and suddenly "went out."

"It was the candle," said Mr. Paterson.

"What candle, sir?" asked Jack, who was half inclined to view the ghost as a real visitor.

"The candle in the bedroom at the corner. There's a mercurial mirror there, and as Linda moves the light about it throws a reflection on the snow," answered Mr. Paterson quietly. "You stop here with Sambo—for if you do not he'll run away and always believe in the spook—while I produce the spook again."

Mr. Paterson went back to his own house.

"Where's he gwine, Massa Jack?" gasped Sambo.

"He's going to show you how the ghost walks. Never mind talking; watch the ghost."

Soon the ghost began its peregrinations again, only this time at a more lively rate than before.

"Come with me," cried Jack, leading the way. All followed, and as they neared the scene of the ghost-walk, its explanation, or at least the cause of it, dawned upon the negro and put to flight any lingering apprehensions of the others.

"Golly," said Sambo, as they returned to the house, "I thought that was a spook shuah."

The story of Sambo's ghost was told at the men's mess for many a day, or rather night, and the incident did a good deal towards putting to flight the superstitious imaginings of many of the simple-hearted men who know the manifestations of nature, not from the point of view of the laboratory or experimenting-room, but from what they see in the midst of their lonely lives amongst the wonders of this northern world.

Chapter X.

A VISIT TO THE TRAPPERS.

SETTING out on this tour of the posts was no joke at any time, and it showed a deal of courage in Jack to face the journey with only young Emack as his companion. Such a meagre support would never have done, had he had any fear of meeting hostile or marauding bands of Indians; but the latter had gone west, from which it was concluded that, like birds, they had all gone in one direction, and would leave none of their number behind. The Indian is no better than the white man under similar conditions of privation and necessity. Twelve dogs, with the famous and favourite Sport as leader, were put in requisition. A large supply of dog-meat, provisions, sleeping-bags and ammunition was securely packed upon the comatic.

Clothed against the fiercest attacks of wind and cold, their rifles slung across their backs, Jack and his fat little companion took their places. At first the course lay up the frozen surface of the river. They continued this way for half a day's journey, when Emack, who had the direction fresh in his mind from the previous trip of two months before, indicated the point at which the dogs

should turn. The mountain pass was filled to a considerable depth with snow, and it was by no means an easy thing to effect an entrance up the side. The snow upon the frozen surface of the stream below covered it to a depth of twenty feet, most of which had blown in from the drifts continually hurled across the mountain peaks and deposited in the chasm.

The short arctic day was now beginning to decline, and Jack was urging the dogs on at their best pace in order to escape the impending blow which the curling snow-mist on the mountain-top gave token of, and to get settled before it should strike, when suddenly the sled began to slide towards the abyss, on an elevated edge of which they were then travelling. He and Emack made herculean efforts to pull it to one side, and shouted wildly to the dogs; but the latter were unable to stop its descent over the shifting stratum of snow, which, without giving outward sign, kept moving swiftly down. Finally breaking altogether from its moorings it precipitated men, sled, and dogs into the abyss of snow thirty feet below. Jack was the first to come to the surface, which he regained after a struggle. Presently the dogs appeared, and then Emack, who upon seeing his master none the worse broke into a shout of laughter.

"Narrow squeak that," said Jack, wading up to where the dogs stood waiting further instructions.

"Squeaky! squeaky!" laughed Emack, thinking no doubt that he was responding in perfect English to the observations of his master.

It was now necessary to proceed very cautiously for a

time, owing to the danger of crevices concealed by the snow. Fortunately the load had remained securely fastened, and by the end of half an hour's hard work they were safe on their way and hallooing as if nothing had happened. It does not strike one who has not lived in the snow-clad region how singularly rapid and effective a means of locomotion the dog-team and sled are. It has not been improved in ages, seeming to come fully up to the standard of requirement for freight, passenger, and hunting purposes without any further additions to its usefulness being needed. The new moon was rising. The landscape lay cold and pale in its purity and whiteness. Away in the distance to the right stretched the mountains, the peaks becoming more prominent apparently the farther inland the chain ran. Deep gullies here and there gave glimpses of their yawning depths, thrown into relief by the sides of the mountains, where the ledges ran along like breastworks before dipping or being lost in the distance. To the left were patches of wood dotting the surface of the earth like small clouds, which in patches dot the sky, while the great dark mass extends far away behind.

"Emack, do you hear the wolves?" asked Jack of his Eskimo companion as he called a halt before plunging down into the valley for a last stretch to the southward before camping.

Emack's face instantly lengthened, or rather came nearer to forming a square, since usually its breadth exceeded its length. He listened attentively, while even the dogs remained silent for a moment. Emack shook his head, but

said nothing. A very amusing expression came over his face, however, as he endeavoured to listen more attentively. His forehead contracted spasmodically.

"No, this not wolf; hit wint," said he at last.

"Why, it cannot be wind, Emack," exclaimed Jack. "We don't feel any wind here, and I am sure it's the howling of wolves. Listen! There it goes again."

A long, low, melancholy sound rose from the south-east, but this time it spread itself away round to the east, opposite the travellers.

"You're right, Emack. You're always right. That's wind. What does it mean?" said Jack.

"Storm-spirit. He cry," responded the superstitious guide reverentially.

"Is there likely to be a storm?"

Emack nodded his head and grinned.

"A bad one? Why don't you tell me?" cried Jack angrily.

"Very bad; all night," replied Emack.

"Well, if that's the case, the sooner we get to cover the better. How would it do to lie to under the shelter of one of these cliffs?"

Emack, by way of reply, took up a bundle, put it in the snow, and heaped the snow over it from the direction in which the wind was coming.

"True!" cried Jack. "We might awake in the morning under a drift twenty feet deep. It's best to stick to the old way."

And he shouted to the dogs, who resumed their journey,

but this time in the direction of the woods to the left, at which they were finally pulled up. By dint of a good deal of labour, for they were unusually unruly, the dogs were unharnessed and liberated. They immediately proceeded to roll in the snow, and then galloped off in different directions. Jack grew apprehensive at this performance, as it would be worse than inconvenient if they did not return; but Emack smiled at his question, and said, "Dogs hunt fox. Sleep py house," which Jack rightly took to mean that when the dogs had finished their little hunt on their own account, they would come back to the camp without fail. This circumspect spirit, however, of theirs was not solely due to their sense of discipline. They were well aware of their danger from large bands of wolves, of which several were sure to be prowling in the vicinity.

"Emack, which — sleeping-bag or house?" inquired Jack, who thought that, in view of the seriousness of the storm, it might be well to consult a wiser head than his own.

"Houth," said Emack sententiously, lisping as usual when called upon to speak quickly.

"Why? why won't the bags do?" continued Jack.

"Two dayth we stay here, p'raps," replied the Eskimo.

"What!" exclaimed his master; "how long will the storm last?"

"Two dayth. P'raps thix. P'raps week," replied Emack, grinning broadly.

Jack adopted the suggestion, and set to work with great

energy cutting snow-blocks, which the practised hand of Emack speedily put in their proper places. One by one the dogs came back and lay lazily down in the snow. By moonset everything was done. Dry twigs had been collected, and the kettle was sending out dense jets of steam, which showed their full size by firelight on the frosty air. Though the wind blew fiercely at times, there was a certain air of snugness and comfort about this little camp in the woods, especially when one looked at the little round snow-hut (which the Eskimos call "igloo"), ready to defy the fiercest raging of the storm as soon as some of the half-melted snow near the fire was spread over it and had become a frozen covering. It would then be cased in a sort of gleaming armour. Jack untied some of the dog-meat, and threw one dog his share, and then another and another, keeping watch over the rest till each had got possession of his own share without fear of molestation. They hadn't had anything for forty-eight hours, so they appreciated it, and were soon busily engaged in gorging. The igloo having had the coat of varnish put over it, Jack and his little guide, having made an excellent cup of coffee, sat down, and with some dried deer-meat and hard biscuit made a good meal preparatory to turning in. The sled was drawn close to the hut and covered securely, while the rifles and ammunition were taken inside. The moon had long since disappeared. The wind was now howling fiercely overhead. By the light of the fire the flakes of snow could be seen drifting swiftly with the wind. The dogs lay in a heap near the hut, coiled up like muffs,

and apparently asleep. Jack took a last look at the little scene before him, and for a moment a thought of home flashed upon him; but he soon dismissed it. He was too far away to waste his tender feelings in useless qualms. A long, low howl broke upon his ear, coming from the mountains; but as it was not repeated, he stepped inside and crawled into his comfortable sleeping-bag. Several times through the night he woke up and listened, but no sound save the rushing of the wind could be heard. When he and Emack had had sleep enough, they got up. It was six o'clock, but there was no sign of dawn. Jack looked out, and saw the dogs lying just as they had been the night before. It had become considerably colder; and when Emack started to light a fire, Jack told him just to make enough to melt the coffee left over in the pot. This, with deer-meat and biscuit, did very well, and served to make the after-smoke more enjoyable. The wind was increasing in force, and by noon a wild northern blizzard was in full swing, that would have made either shooting or fishing a dangerous occupation.

By twelve o'clock the following night the fury of the wind had completely died away, and on rising at four to take a peep at things, Jack viewed a scene quite beyond our feeble powers of description. The fresh, pure covering of snow, pierced here and there by frowning woods or towering mountain, was lighting up with all the splendours of the rainbow, or as if with the reflection of some vast conflagration, considerably enhanced in beauty, too, by the prismatic

effect of the shimmering crystals of snow. The northern lights were shooting heavenward in all their glory. Sometimes, as they sank out of sight for a moment, the stars shone forth with twice their usual splendour, looking like great gleaming globes of dancing fire.

"Who could be lonely," thought Jack, "in such a paradise of beauty as this!"

"Hey, Emack!" he cried, as his eye turned from the scene before him.

In an instant the Eskimo was beside him.

"What does master want?"

"Can't we have breakfast now, and harness the dogs, and be off? How many leagues have we yet?"

"We have twenty league yet to de first way Jackson lifth," lisped the Eskimo.

"Hurrah! then away with you. Let us show Jackson what we can do."

The dogs were soon up, poking about or waiting for scraps, sitting at some distance from the newly-lighted fire, looking at it expectantly; but they were doomed to disappointment, for the meal was of the scantiest. In other fifteen minutes they were yelping and bounding over the snow in the direction of the first of the hunting stations. They had gone but a few miles when by careless driving the leader got entangled with one of the others, and Jack, instead of drawing them back one by one till he reached the entanglement, himself went forward. In going round to their heads he stumbled and fell, when instantly two dogs set upon him with wolfish howls. There is no

doubt that he would quickly have been bitten to death and devoured, had it not been for the presence of mind both of himself and Emack. By a furious stroke of his arm he knocked the foremost dogs off, and instantly rolled away. Emack in the meantime seized the sled, and bracing himself, held it until his master was able to get up, when all further thoughts of attack on the part of the dogs vanished. Jack, however, did not give up his desire of vengeance, which he promptly took by giving the guilty ones a sound thrashing with his stout dogwhip. This done, they set out once more; but Jack's nerves suffered a severe reaction at the thought of the horrible death from which he had so narrowly escaped, and he lay down on the sled whilst the faithful Emack drove. Notwithstanding the swiftness of the dogs, the comparatively short day's journey seemed an exceedingly long one. At one place wolves came out of the woods, and ran alongside the team for some distance; but a bullet from Jack's rifle laid one low, when the rest decamped. This accommodating conduct, however, was due more to the daylight, which seems to have an intimidating effect on wolves the world over, than to any real fear of the gun.

The route now lay along the edge of a lonely forest, which stretched away to a great depth, and extended for not less than twenty miles in the direction in which they were going. The dark fir and stunted spruce, notwithstanding the wind, were hanging heavy with recent snow, and the bed of the forest was covered to a uniform depth of several feet. What a hopeless task Jack thought it

would be for any one to attempt to journey anywhere without snow-shoes. In deep snow such as this the traveller soon sinks above his waist, when the use of the legs is rendered impossible by the high wall on every side, and one comes to a halt in a prison as secure as one made of stone.

There is a certain monotony in travelling by dog-team where the country travelled over is level. They had now entered upon a piece of snow-covered prairie extending for some distance in front, although its narrowness was more suggestive of the valley of some ancient river than of a western prairie; and Jack, having recovered from his shaking-up at the hands of the dogs, was inclined to converse.

"Have you ever been through these woods, Emack?" he inquired.

"Yes;" and Emack accompanied the affirmative with his usual smile and nod.

"How do you know?" again asked Jack, banteringly.

"Because know," replied Emack.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jack; "that's the way women talk. They always say that too."

"Yeth, yeth!" exclaimed Emack, evidently appreciating the joke. His eyes, nearly hidden in the folds of wrinkles, suggested irresistibly the Mongolian physiognomy. There was no mistaking the resemblance of Emack to the washers of linen in Canada. Beyond this, however, the resemblance did not go, as it was plain that washing was no part of the occupation or daily life of the Eskimo.

"Is it by the general lie of the land?"

"What dat?" said Emack innocently.

"I mean, is it by the general appearance of the country that you are able to judge?"

Emack's face lengthened, and he brought his forefinger up to the point of his nose in sore perplexity.

"I mean, Emack, do you remember how and where you are going on your journeys by the trees, by the mountains, by the rivers, and so on?"

"No, sirree; riverth froze up now."

This unexpected and ridiculous use of the word "sirree" caused Jack to laugh heartily.

The dogs suddenly began barking furiously. Both men looked round carefully, but neither could discover any cause for the outburst.

"What's that noise about, anyhow?" said Jack.

"Dogs hungry. Same as made them bite master," replied Emack.

But this by no means satisfied Jack. There was a peculiar note of alarm in their voices. Presently a black speck appeared in the distance; then another and another. At last a pack of wolves made its appearance, composed of big fellows, the dreaded white wolf at the head. They came straight on at a long, easy gallop. Jack turned to Emack for information as to what had better be done, but the latter assured him that wolves never attacked anybody in broad daylight. However, they both unslung their rifles. The dogs galloped on uneasily, and now and then indulged in spasms of fierce barking. Even Emack began

at last to view the pack with apprehension. It divided into two parts, and each ranged itself at some distance on either side of the sled. Unfortunately their ammunition was packed away, and Jack was doubtful about the wisdom of using recklessly what they had in their belts. What could have made them so bold?

This pack afterwards proved to have been a section of a large one that had been driven by the prolonged severe weather and scarcity of food in their own quarter of the country to a raid into the open. The main body had gone towards Jackson's hut, and meeting him out hunting in the midst of a plain which he was then crossing, awaited a favourable opportunity to attack him. Somehow, by a sort of instinct which these animals possess, they seemed to be aware of the fact that their intended prey had not yet spent all his cartridges. Ordinarily, too, when meditating an attack in this way, they will circle around at about rifle-shot distance; but on this occasion they drew in considerably, as if aware of the fact that Jackson had brought his gun with him, and not his rifle. The hunter was five miles from his hut, and there was no covering near—nothing but death, and a horrible one at that, when his last cartridge was spent. What, therefore, was his joy when in the distance he descried a sled and dog-team advancing rapidly! Long before his shout, which in this climate can be heard at such an immense distance, had reached Jack, the latter saw the signal of uplifted arms which accompanied it; and being well aware, not only from his own apprehensions, but from Emack's warning, that

something unusual was abroad, he shouted to the dogs and fired into the wolves running alongside, while Emack fished amongst the luggage for the cartridges. These he secured by a lucky guess as to the bag in which they had been placed; and with this ample supply they soon rid themselves of their gaunt and hungry companions. The wolves encircling Jackson now came prominently into view, and they at the same time became aware of the arrival of the rescuers. A few shots from Jack's repeating rifle laid as many low, the rest scurrying off towards the woods; and in a few minutes Jackson and his rescuers were clasping hands, the hungry dogs, led by the stranger who had been the first to attack Jack, rending the carcass of one of the wolves meanwhile.

"It was a narrow escape, sir," said Jackson, with a sigh of intense relief.

"A few minutes or perhaps an hour would have finished you, I think myself, Jackson," said Jack.

"Less than that, sir. I had but one cartridge left, which I was about to fire at a black brute that was creeping closer and closer. When that was gone, they would soon find it out, and my time would have come."

"I had a nasty experience too," said Jack, showing the marks of the bites upon his wrists, which he had received from his own dogs.

"It must have been a stranger, sir," said Jackson; "surely your own dogs would never do it."

"Yes, you're right. It was that gray brute on the left. I believe if it hadn't been for Sport and Towser holding

back, he would have bitten me very severely before I could have driven him off."

"Kill him, sir," said Jackson beseechingly; "I know that kind. If you don't, he'll kill you yet. They are like bad men—you can do nothing with them; and the worst of it is that they will corrupt the most faithful of the team, which on no account would harm a hair of your head of their own free will. You see, he'll get you down some day, and the smell of blood and hunger will madden some of the others, and leader or no leader, they'll think only of their stomachs. An Eskimo dog, when faithful, is faithful; but it is not well to put temptation before them."

"You evidently feel thoroughly aroused on that point," said Jack, affecting a slight laugh; but he deemed it wise to dispose of the gray dog, which he did at the first convenient opportunity.

As the sled was not big enough to carry Jackson too, on account of the load of supplies, Jack decided to walk the rest of the way, bidding Emack to go on with the team to the hut. As the snow was firm, and the walking exceptionally good, they were not long in reaching the hunter's domicile. His wife appeared at the door to meet him, but she respectfully retired on seeing the inspector.

The hut was by no means an unpleasant place to look upon. Well and strongly built, as we have described it before, it was, however, from a hunter's point of view, particularly inviting inside. It was divided into three apartments—one for Jackson and his dusky spouse; an-

other for his two little half-breed children; and the third, about fourteen feet square, was at once drawing-room, dining-room, kitchen, and spare-room for guests. A large stove of thin sheet-iron was the housewife's pride and the source of warmth. No matter how the elements raged, or how fierce the "norther," to gain the hut was to gain a sure and pleasant haven of refuge. If the good people, who live in fine houses in cities would know what it is to have a home and to truly idolize the domestic hearth, let them sojourn for a time in the great north-east, and they will prize it as they never dreamt of prizing it before. To the hunter and his family it is the one place which they can call their own in the habitable world, and there are no neighbours to fight with and to go to law with regarding disputed boundaries. Another feature of this lonely home-life, and one which commends itself to the notice of people of more advanced conditions of life, is the peace and happiness always reigning in the humble family itself. The hunter loves his wife and children, and it is very rare to find one so inhuman as to illtreat either. The wife and children, on their part, watch for the coming of their father and provider, and run to meet him with a lavish display of welcome and tenderness that springs from the very source of human joy itself. At night the hunter has his family all around him. The children are not anxious to roam about the streets, not only because there are no streets to roam in, but also because the long, mournful howl of the wolf makes them feel glad that they are in some place of sure

protection. The absence of the temptations of town-life leaves them happy and contented. It was into such a home-circle that Jack and his Eskimo servant entered. The smell of stewing venison shed a delicious aroma throughout the cabin. The children had disappeared also, but shyly came out again on Jack's invitation.

The hunter's wife greeted him respectfully, and then went back to her work of putting everything in shape, and preparing the midday meal. A fresh supply of pork and deer-meat was put into the pan, and the rich, delicious odour filled the air, and made everybody anxious for hostilities to begin.

Jack was amusing himself and the children, who had begun to be quite friendly, and did not notice that Mrs. Jackson was standing modestly by. As soon as she caught his attention, she began to thank him for saving her husband's life. This, however, was more than he was prepared for, and to avoid the poor woman's embarrassing expressions of gratitude, he got up and instructed Emack to shoot the gray dog. In a few minutes the crack of a rifle told him that his orders had been carried out. After dinner, Jack, with the hunter and Emack, settled himself down to have a good smoke.

"How has the hunting been this season, Jackson?"

"Very good, sir. I've trapped two silvers, a gray, thirteen martens, sixteen wolves, and two wolverines," answered the hunter.

"A good haul indeed," said Jack. "You have two months yet, too. Much deer-meat?"

"Never better, sir. But the Indians seem to be comin' more an' more every year. I think it's them that's drivin' the deer up this way. They seem to be all comin' from the south-west, and usually it's the other way—nor'-east. But we've had some rippin' blizzards—ain't we, Liza?" and Jackson laughed, as he appealed to his spouse, at the remembrance of the wild, riotous career of the wind on more than one occasion.

Jack smiled too, when he thought of having been cooped up for two days in his igloo, while the stormy winds were doing their worst outside.

"They tell me Nanoak has had wonderful luck with the wolves," continued the hunter suggestively.

"Yes, yes; that reminds me. How on earth does he succeed so well?"

"Don't you know, sir?" said Jackson, smiling.

"Well, of course, Jackson, I have heard all sorts of yarns about him and his ability to kill wolves; but what is really at the bottom of it all, I am sure I don't know. He must be a dead shot surely."

"I saw him kill the whole pack about ten days back," chuckled the hunter.

"What! how did he do it?" exclaimed Jack.

"He has a cage," said Jackson knowingly, "made of wolf-hide. He goes out looking for fur or game, and when he runs across a pack, or they run across him, he pulls the cage out of his jacket, and puts it up like a small tent on the snow. He is so strong that a little bundle like that makes very little difference to him, but it makes

a big difference to the wolves. When they show fight, as they did with me to-day, he quietly sits down, pulls out the cage, puts it up, and invites them to come and see him. When they come close enough, he quietly pops them off, and they don't like the look o' the thing neither."

"What keeps the cage stiff in case the wolves jump on it?" inquired Jack.

"Four iron rods and braces. I didn't see it close, but I am sure that's what they were."

"How much would the whole affair weigh?"

"Mebbe seventy pounds, sir," said Jackson.

"He must be a strong man," remarked Jack quietly.

"He is a strong one, sir, and a bad one, if you don't mind me saying so."

Mrs. Jackson came over with a big pot of coffee, the northerner's chief delight. Alcohol does not do in cold climates. The reaction after it is too great. The nerves collapse, as it were, and the after effect of alcohol makes one very liable to chills. Coffee, tea, and beef-tea suit best. When the hunter comes in from hunting, or from a long journey, then a "wee drap" does no harm—in fact, it is highly nourishing and at the same time soothing; but in "active service," as the soldiers say, it isn't the thing.

The arctic day had now pretty nearly closed in, and as people in these latitudes are not accustomed to sit up unless there's work to do, they save oil by going to bed, which, after all, is not much of a change. To simply roll over and pull the robes about one is all that is required

to complete the transformation. The stars were very bright, and Jack for a time thought there must be a beacon in the east; but as it surpassed that possibility in brilliance, he came to the conclusion that it was only Venus after all, and resigned himself to well-earned repose. Emack slept near by, and snored. It was his one fault. Hunters are usually free from disturbing vices of this kind; but poor Emack was unable to control his breathing apparatus at night, and amused if he did not annoy his master.

The next morning found them on their way to the next post.

"Is that a lake yonder?" asked Jack, as the dog-team rounded a curve, and came in view of a large plain of snow.

"Yethir," said Emack in his tongue-tied way.

"Any fish?"

Emack put back his head and laughed heartily, although his voice did not rise above a whisper.

"What are you laughing at?" said Jack, unable to repress a smile at his guide's amusement.

Emack stretched out his arms to indicate an immense bundle, and looked knowingly at his master.

"You mean a tremendous quantity by that, I suppose?" observed Jack.

Emack looked eagerly out of the corner of his eyes, as if listening. Jack saw that the word "tremendous" had in turn perplexed him.

"Great big number of fish!" cried Jack, determined to

have himself understood, and the question itself of fish or no fish set at rest.

Emack nodded his head this time, and repeated his usual formula of "yethir." For some unexplainable reason his tongue wagged better whenever the weather began to grow milder. Sure enough the morning developed into a beautiful day. The eastern sky became a lovely opal in colour, and the slightly-moving air was soft and balmy. As the travellers got well out on the lake or plain of ice, Jack stopped the dogs, and undid his spear from the luggage, while Emack got out the chisel and line. The latter consisted of common whip-cord, thick and strong, having a piece of red flannel dangling at the end. Emack worked away industriously with his big chisel at the thick stratum of ice; but it was of great thickness, and he was obliged, after going down some three or four feet, to begin at the top again and widen it, to allow of his getting into the hole bodily. The ice was found to be quite five feet thick, and Jack reasonably despaired of being able to spear many at that depth. When he had fastened a dog-trace to the end of the spear, to prevent his losing it, in case of letting it slip, Emack lowered the gaudy bait into the water. In less than a minute the red rag was the centre of attraction for many of the finny tribe. Jack bided his time, till he saw a fine big head sniffing curiously at the piece of flannel, when down went the spear, and he hauled up a large trout not less than fifteen pounds in weight. He decided to feed this to the dogs, and Emack set about cutting it up

in equal portions. Inside there were two small trout, filling the creature's stomach quite full; yet, as it seemed, his voracious appetite was not appeased. Having distributed this snack amongst the expectant dogs, which always looked to getting something when food was about, Jack returned to the hole, and soon had two more, one of them being not less than twenty-five pounds in weight. Six more, small ones, were added to the catch before the bait was withdrawn and the fish packed away for the benefit of the people at the next post. Well satisfied, apparently, with the attention shown them, the dogs sped away over the snow even more swiftly than before; and so well and strongly were they going that Jack decided not to break the journey for luncheon, but to keep straight on. At nightfall they were within three hours of the next post, having gone the almost incredible distance of one hundred miles since the start in the early morning. The distance was put at that as the result of many estimates by the travellers of preceding years, it having been agreed that the trail leading through the mountains across the river was full thirty-five leagues in length. On the edge of the river was an old hut, sometimes used by travellers to sleep in. The team drew up before this cabin, which was the very acme of tenantless desolation.

"You get things ready," shouted Jack, "and I will carry the robes in and make ready for the night before the last ray of sunset disappears, for I think it's going to be a black night, and perhaps a stormy one."

Emack got ready to light the fire, while Jack went to

the back of the cabin and let down the latch. He threw open the door and peered into the darkness. Then he went back to the sled, picked up the bags, and threw them in. Imagine his surprise on hearing a growl, not very loud, but to his now practised ear quite unmistakable. Two large balls of fire gleamed in the darkest of the corners. Jack beat a hasty retreat to arm himself, and before re-entering took the precaution to knock some shutters off the window facing the west, which had the effect of lighting up the room as if by magic. He and Emack then went round to the back door and entered. The mystery was explained. A large shaggy black bear lay in the corner. He had been disturbed in his long winter sleep. His coat was thick and desirable plunder, in addition to the fact that Jack desired the quarters for himself and Emack. They advanced very cautiously to the attack. At the first prod from the chisel his bearship rose on his hind legs and took a step forward; but Jack, being prepared for this manœuvre, raised his rifle and fired, hitting him under the left shoulder. He rolled over dead. On examination he proved to be very fat, and to have a fine soft coat. The dogs were again lucky, getting a small portion of bear-meat. Jack looked forward to having a good night's rest after the fatigues of the day, but a solitary wolf across the river kept up a long and dismal howl that banished sleep from his weary eyes.

At the post, which he reached next morning in about three hours, Jack found the hunter somewhat uneasy about a band of Indians that had lately passed that way with

war-paint on, and evidently making for an Eskimo village, or perhaps for some Eskimo hunters who had gone inland. The desire for blood and glory seems inextinguishable in the heart of the Indian. As long as any of them remain upon the face of the earth, with opportunities for scalping and murder, they will be found following the path of their real or fancied enemy. Soon after reaching the post one of the dogs died, apparently from poison—no doubt part of that put out for wolves by Emmet the hunter himself.

During the week spent at this post Jack enjoyed fine sport, besides bringing in some valuable fur. On the second day—the first being taken for rest—he and the hunter started out early in the morning, and reached a plateau high up amongst the mountains at noon. Here they found tracks of caribou, and they soon caught up with a large herd nibbling quietly at some low shrubby-looking bushes. Emmet gave Jack, as his superior or rather commanding officer, the first shot, which resulted in the death of a fine buck. A doe fell to the hunter before they got out of range. It was useless pursuing them, as the crust upon the snow was strong enough to enable them to get safely away. The view from this high plain amid the mountains was entrancing. The sky was pale blue clear down to the horizon, and the dazzling whiteness of the snow extended on the left as far as the eye could reach. Here and there a mountain peak looked haughtily down upon its fellows, while away on the right the black forest extended for many miles. In some places the defiles were by no means devoid of danger. Avalanches on a small

scale kept falling continually from the tops of the precipices, shooting down into the defiles below. Once Jack opened his eyes to find himself buried up to his neck, and it was no easy matter getting out. Fortunately Emmet knew a safe way home, but as it led along the river they did not expect to be able to stalk anything. As they rounded the last hill, before descending into the valley, a gray wolf, prompted no doubt by hunger to take his solitary way, shot across their path. Jack waited for Emmet, who was ahead, to fire; and as Emmet waited for Jack, the wolf got off scot-free, much to the annoyance of both. Lest this ridiculous situation should occur again, Jack told Emmet to fire on sight, without waiting to pay his respects to him, and then they could decide afterwards to whom the quarry belonged. In the woods below, the partridge and ptarmigan were as thick as flies in July. In ten minutes the hunters had filled their small game-bags, and strung long sashes of nice fat partridges across their shoulders and under each arm.

Mrs. Emmet, like Jackson's wife, was a half-breed, and, contrary to the usual custom, she had inherited the ugliness of both the white race and the Indian. As a rule, half-castes unite in themselves the finest physical features of each side. In this case, however, she had played traitress to tradition. Likewise she had no family, and being thus left destitute by nature of both the pride and consolation of a woman's heart, she had become more and more intractable as the years dragged by, and had grown into so unhappy a frame of mind and

disposition that she was known far and wide as "the wolverine."

When Jack and Emmet reached the cabin late in the afternoon, Emack met them, carrying an immense trout, which he had just been cleaning at the back door. Within hung a salmon, of the species known as the Hearne salmon, but, properly speaking, a true sea-trout. Emack had caught it also in the river near by, where it had lingered too long in its journey to the sea.

Mrs. Emmet was a good cook, at least for Labrador, where cooking is not thought so much of as in lower latitudes, and she excelled herself on this occasion. She presented the hungry men with a fish and game supper such as Jack at any rate had not tasted for many a day. He took good care to praise her cookery; but as her face was not less ugly in smiling than in repose, he did not look at her to see the effect of his complimentary acknowledgments.

Chapter XI.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

AT this stage of the experiences of Jack Ralston in northern latitudes, it is necessary for the reader to transport himself to the shore of the ocean adjacent to the mouth of Whale River, and about two hundred miles due north of where we left Jack in the last chapter. Here we find a typical village of the Eskimos, numbering all told thirty souls. All summer they had expended their energies in hunting the seal and in catching sea-trout and salmon. Tents of sealskin protected them from rain and wind, and from the occasional days of intense summer heat. These had now long since been folded up and put away, giving place to the more familiar igloo or snow-house. It may occur to the reader that this form of house would also suit the Indian inhabitants of this northern clime, but it possesses qualities of dampness, notwithstanding its great warmth, which render it fatal to them.

The Eskimos, like other people, find it desirable to have, when practicable, a change of diet; and they are accustomed each year to take advantage of the season of fur and game to migrate inland in search of deer-meat, and

to gather in whatever pelts may come their way. Of this particular group of Eskimos the leader was the famous Ualick, who was also the guide, counsellor, and friend of many of the adjacent villages. It is a curious fact that the Eskimos have no authorized chiefs or leaders, as we know them. They are democrats of the purest type both in name and practice, having no rulers; though, as in all countries of whatever kind, they have their natural leaders, whom no system of mediocrity can suppress.

Thus we find that in this low or undeveloped plan of Eskimo government there exists, to all intents and purposes, the same system of voluntary leadership as in the most highly-developed systems of government in the civilized world. In the most highly-developed conditions of civilization we find a people united under one or more representatives or leading men. In the most primitive we find the same state of affairs. There is, however, a characteristic difference in the laws of property of these two classes or conditions. In the highest class, property is property. It belongs to specified and recognized owners. But amongst the primitive races the communistic principle prevails. Property there is the property of the village or nation, and that which is personal is limited to that in personal use. Hence there are no rich and no poor. All are alike. To hold property in food or raiment while others are starving or unclothed would be considered disgraceful. This communistic feeling is supplanted amongst more civilized peoples by what is known as charity. But what is charity amongst them is a matter both of sympathy and of right amongst

such nations as the simple Eskimos. It is strange that such differences in favour of so primitive a people are at once so prominent and so firmly rooted. However, such is the case, and we must content ourselves with stating it, leaving to others the elaboration of so highly interesting a problem.

All the worldly goods of the Eskimos were being packed and placed upon their comatic, to which barking, yelping dogs were soon attached. Laughing women, carrying laughing, cooing, round little balls of fat baby slung upon their backs, got ready for their long tramp over snow-clad hills and dales, and through forests carpeted deep with snow, their sanguine minds filled with pleasant anticipations. Smiling, pleasant-faced men cracked their whips and gradually got the string of dog-teams under way. Unlike the Indian women, the Eskimo women do not perform the heavy work. In that and most other respects the Eskimo is a model of gallantry and tender consideration, excelling, indeed, even his own wife in the care and protection of their children.

But perhaps the best epitome of the differences between the characters of the Eskimo and the Indian is found in the leading man of each. The typical leader amongst the Eskimos is powerful in physique and peaceful in disposition, being a statesman of peace rather than of war. The Indian, on the other hand, has a passion for the glory of war, is a master of intrigue, and rejoices more in the scalp of an enemy than in the comfort of a friend. But both races are alike improvident. Strange as it may seem, no amount of experience will ever teach the lesson of "laying

up for a rainy day." Consequently starvation, when it comes, carries them off like an epidemic. This lack of precaution would be the first thing to suggest itself to a white man watching the preparation and departure of this happy family.

The seal-meat lasted only for the first seventy-five miles, which occupied seven days of travelling, camping, building snow-houses, and breaking camp again, and yet no game had appeared. Ualick began to be alarmed. No deer or caribou or trace of one had presented itself to the eager and searching gaze either of himself or of any member of the party. What had become of them all? Surely they must meet with them soon. It was possible that they had gone off in one of their spasmodic migrations, but it was hardly possible that every animal of whatever kind had gone too. At night they listened in vain for the howl of the wolf. He too had gone in pursuit of food. His melancholy, blood-curdling howl would have been music to their ears. But it was not to be. A few partridges were all that could be got, and furnished food for the children, now beginning to cry from hunger. Even this usually abundant supply of food for the hunter began gradually to disappear. Despair was in every face. The men paced up and down in the agony of feeling that their loved ones must starve to death. Of themselves they gave no thought. Being Christians, they constantly knelt and besought the kind Father of the Eskimos to save His children from a cruel death. How they begged that He would send them only a few partridges! They didn't want deer.

That would be too much to ask. Women wailed bitterly and held up their children for God to see, but none uttered reproaches. It was God's will that they should starve, and if so they must starve. But even the absorbing faith of this simple people began to weaken before the spectre of death that stalked horribly before them. The pangs of extreme hunger and exhaustion filled their minds and imaginations with horrible fancies in human shape.

The horrid cunning of the desperate then began to make itself manifest. First one mother and then another disappeared in the wintry gloom with her offspring and returned without it. Several of the little ones thus left to the miseries of a long death were rescued by the men, who, more tender-hearted than the women, searched the children out and brought them in. The camp moved on a shorter distance each day. The population of thirty souls at starting had been reduced to twenty-one. The gaunt faces of the wanderers spoke louder than any prayers, but still no sign of food. No longer able to keep together, they straggled and fell in their tracks one by one. Ualick and his son had done for their companions all that men could do. Their wasted and expended energies had left them mere skeletons. Ualick had carried his wife on his back for two days. The dogs having been consumed days before, they were left without means of transport. Ualick loved this woman as deeply and tenderly as any white man ever loved a white woman. Those who do not know what the love of the wilderness means have yet to learn of the deepest emotion of the human heart. How

he prayed to his God that he might be enabled to save her! Young Ualick himself, the strongest man in his tribe, began to drag one weary limb after the other. Had his brave father with his burden not been on before, he would ere this have lain down to die. Of the rest no sign appeared. They already lay dead, or living skeletons, in the snow, the chill of death following fast in the wake of the chilling wind.

At last Ualick could go no farther. Nature refused to toil longer. His wife clung to him unconscious. Death was stealing upon her. Ualick wept from very weakness. Tears stood in his gaunt and hungry-looking eyes. Beside him lay his son asleep. Hark! what is that? Ualick by a great effort lifts his head. The sound comes nearer. Are they wolves? No. It is the barking of dogs. He hears the cry of the driver. By a truly mighty effort he rises to his feet. He totters a moment and then stands still. His hand wanders over his eyes that swim from weakness. He is not many yards from the hill-top. He reaches it, and with a wild, aimless wave of his arms and a hoarse, uncertain shout he staggers and falls. But he has been seen. Jack has been giving his dog-team their daily exercise. The strange figure of an Eskimo sharply defined against the sky attracts his attention. Why has he fallen? Often has Jack heard of starvation amongst the Eskimos. Emmet has told him that the game are scarce to the far north. At any rate he will see. In another instant the dogs, obedient to the whip and voice, have wheeled and are galloping towards Ualick. Jack

suddenly remembers the danger of a fallen man. He draws his rifle and looks to the breech. The dogs now see the prostrate form and gallop furiously. Not food but blood is what they smell. However, Jack stops them before they get unmanageable, whips them into line, and turns the sled upside down, which securely tethers it. The harder the dogs pull, the deeper the pointed runners stick into the snow. It takes him but a moment to see that his fears have been well founded. He finds all three. He drags the sled round, facing the dogs for home, and places the three forms upon it. Ualick's eyes open, and a faint smile lights up his pale face, but he is too weak to speak. The dogs drag their load lightly away. In a half-hour's time the cabin looms up in the distance. The watchful eye of Emmet sees that something unusual has taken place.

"This is Ualick!" cried Jack, as he reached the hut and met Emmet coming out. "They are starving. I picked them up some distance away. Hurry, Emmet, and get some deer-broth. I will give them a little whisky in the meantime."

Emmet and his wife soon had the pot steaming and the deer-meat brewing. Meanwhile, Jack devoted his attention to the exhausted Eskimos. Ualick's son, whom hereafter we shall call Ualicson, in conformity with English usage, although he was known in the north by the double name only, was the farthest gone of the three. To him Jack gave the first mouthful of whisky, then to Ualick's little wife, and finally to Ualick himself. The whisky was tempered with water, so that it might not prove too

strong for the weakened stomachs. He then rubbed their temples vigorously, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing them awake out of their torpor. Ualick was the first to speak, but his voice did not rise above a hoarse whisper.

"Saw you at de fort," said he.

"Yes, Ualick; I remember having seen you once and having heard of you many times. You were injured last Christmas, weren't you?"

"Yeth," said the Eskimo. "Fell and twisted arm. Not bad. Am all right now."

"Who is this?" asked Jack, pointing to Ualickson.

"He my son, Ualick's son," and Ualick grinned broadly. "Dis my wife," and he put his hand behind his back, never for one moment dreaming that she was not there. On finding, however, that she was not on his back, he bounded up like a deer, but tottered and fell again, his wild look, however, changing to a smile of satisfaction as he saw her near by. The necessities of their condition did not seem to suggest themselves to him until Emmet entered with a bowl of broth, when the smell of it roused them all once more, and their usually placid faces assumed a fierce, wolfish expression.

"Woman," said Ualick, pointing to his wife, meaning that Jack should give it to her first. Jack gave her a spoonful only.

"More," exclaimed Ualick.

"No," said Jack firmly; "she must not have too much at once. Take two spoonfuls now, and let the young man have two."

The obedient fellows did as they were told. Two spoonfuls each, although they could have drunk the bowlful at one gulp.

"Nikitik, Tootagoo—where are dey?" inquired Ualick, looking up.

"Who?" said Jack.

"Nikitik, Tootagoo, and Klakuk," replied Ualick.

"Are they your friends? Are there others behind?" exclaimed Jack in horror.

"Yeth," said Ualick earnestly, and vainly trying to stretch his limbs to rise. He evidently wanted to go to their rescue. But Jack told him to remain where he was, and to give the other two a little food, while he and Emmet started back after the others. Poor Ualick heaved a great sigh of sorrow, knowing full well, poor fellow, that death had claimed them for his own. Jack and Emmet made all haste with the dogs again, and were soon on their way. About a mile beyond where Jack had met Ualick lay a woman and child, face downwards in the snow, frozen like blocks of marble. A hundred yards or so farther back lay two men side by side, looking as if they had been dead some time, and of course frozen hard. A snowstorm began to rage violently, which would in a few minutes hide everything from view, and effectually remove every trace alike of the dead and of the dying. Sorrowfully Jack retraced his way, reflecting mournfully upon the sad fate of these poor simple children of the wilderness. Ualick was pained beyond measure at the loss of his people, and Jack and Emmet withdrew to work

outside, in order that they might not be witnesses of his grief.

Two bowls of broth and some bread had greatly revived the Eskimos, who recovered with amazing rapidity. They remained a few days to get strong again, and then, with an ample supply of provisions, started back for the coast, to join one of the neighbouring villages. At parting they clasped their benefactors in their arms affectionately, and thanked them with tears and exclamations of gratitude.

"Your wife is very small," said Jack to Ualick.

"Yes; big wife take too much cloth for dress," replied Ualick.

Both laughed heartily, and taking her on his broad and powerful back, Ualick started once more on his journey through the land of snow and ice.

The following day Jack and Emack started on their own return journey across the vast expanse of untenanted wilderness; and as the route taken led across country in a straight line to the post, they had accomplished the distance of one hundred and seventy-five miles by dusk of the second day. The journey was barren of incident, and the weather, as if to make amends for its late distressing conduct, was bright sunshine by day and a blaze of northern lights at night. Mrs. Paterson and Linda listened with interest to the account of his journey, but were overwhelmed with horror at the fate of the Eskimo village. Mr. Paterson was well pleased with Jack's success, and advanced him to a high place in his favour.

Chapter XII.

SUMMER IN THE FAR NORTH.

THOUGH we hope the reader is interested in the Eskimos, no doubt he or she would like to hear at least a little of the dear people at the post without too long an intermission.

We shall glide, however, over the following spring and early summer as swiftly as we should fly over the surface of the earth if we were fortunate enough to possess wings, since nothing out of the ordinary happened at the fort during that time which it is necessary for us to record. Linda, as she grew more and more into womanhood, became more conspicuous for her beauty, and her father and mother began to think seriously of sending her to Montreal or Toronto, where she might make a suitable match. Without doubt, a girl of her beautiful face and form and winning manners would have no trouble in attracting to her side the best and most eligible young men of good standing and prospects. They were quite aware of the strong regard on Jack's part for their daughter, but they had no desire that she should be compelled to be a resident of this northern wilderness as Jack's wife, when they themselves, having retired from the hardships and, it may

be added, happy life of the station at Fort Hope, should be comfortably settled in some Canadian city to spend their declining years, as would in due time be the case, when the snows of Time's winter had settled upon their heads.

The glory of the early summer was unspeakably great. The twilight of the June days extended so far into the night that it almost met the first peep of dawn. The earth was spreading its carpet of wild flowers, and the mountain sides were clothed with myrtle green. The rills, brooks, streams, and rivers, long since unlocked from their icy fetters, sported gaily along in their courses, through cañon, wood, and plain. The Eskimos of the post had departed for their hunting and fishing grounds in the far north, and Fort Hope wore a pleasing and almost pastoral appearance. Mr. Paterson, his wife, and daughter, spent many a pleasant hour rambling in the woods adjacent to the post, without fear of wolves or other molestation. Upon the surface of the river they were wont, accompanied by Jack Ralston, to spend the long evenings, singing to the silence of the mountains, and Linda would laugh to hear her sweet voice echoed in the distant hills. The little garden, with such vegetables as could be raised in this high latitude, presented an aspect suggestive of salads and new potatoes. The small plot of ground near the front of the fort, devoted by Linda to the culture of flowers, likewise presented a gay and festive appearance; although she was fain to confess that the harebell, lady's slipper, and orchid of the forest were more delicate and more beautiful

than anything cultivated by the human hand, so idle is it for man to attempt to rival the work of God.

The summer vanished like a lovely day. The ship came as usual on its annual trip at the end of the season; but Mr. and Mrs. Paterson could not bring themselves to the point of parting with their daughter, at any rate for that year; nor was Linda anxious to leave them, notwithstanding all their former resolutions and plans. The thought pictured in her fancy of her happy home far away in the north—a little kingdom in itself, where no temptation to stray from the domestic delights of her own fireside ever presented itself, and where the picturesque though rude inhabitants of the wilds formed so alluring a background to life at the post—found her in tears at the idea of abandoning it, so attached do mortals become to kinfolk and familiar surroundings. It is this feeling and nothing more that keeps the Indian in his tent of skins and the Eskimo in his igloo.

We shall not pause here to note incidents similar to those already described by us, such as the discharge of the ship's cargo; nor shall we refer at length to Jack's letters from home, sweet as they were to him, being the first messages from home since leaving; nor to the approach and celebration of Christmas—the games this year having nothing noteworthy about them, owing to the small number and poor quality of the participants. The hunters, too, were engaged in trapping, and the returns for their labours promised too well to admit of taking holidays.

Chapter XIII.

WITH THE ESKIMOS.

LET us now return for a time to the coast, to the homes of the Eskimos. As had been supposed by Jackson and Emmet, and reported to the fort, the Indians had gone on the warpath against their involuntary enemies the Eskimos—involuntary because hostility was not the work of the latter, but entirely due to the ferocious nature and warlike propensities of the Indians themselves. The most conservative of peoples, the Indians have preserved the memory of real and fancied wrongs from generation to generation with a steadfastness worthy of a better cause. Somehow, notwithstanding the kindness and numerous benefactions of the Hudson Bay officials at Fort Hope and at other of the lesser posts of Labrador, the discontent of their brethren in the Rocky Mountains and in the region stretching to Hudson Bay had spread amongst the Nauscopees and their kindred, this feeling being further aggravated by rumours that the Company was about to deprive them of their happy hunting-grounds, the heaven of their future state—namely, the unexplored region to which we have referred. That this sacred spot should become the waste place of the white men was more

than the superstitious nature of the Indian could stand, and if they did not find other means of soothing their resentment and alarm, the hostility which found vent against the Eskimos would beyond doubt be transferred to the Company itself, so absurd are the rumours and influences at work amongst these ignorant tribes. On the present occasion, as on the previous one, the Eskimos were at home and prepared, the Indians succeeding in cutting off a few stragglers only. Hideous in war-paint, and with the scalps of their slaughtered enemies dangling at their belts, the Nauscopees returned to their own side of the big river, giving the post a wide berth. The Eskimos, left once more to themselves, resumed their hunting for the walrus and seal. This perilous vocation is pursued with much spirit and sometimes success.

On the north coast of Labrador the tide rises to the enormous height of forty-eight feet, necessitating the building of the snow huts or sealskin tents, according to the season, upon the very top of the high banks. In winter these snow huts serve as a base of supplies, while the Eskimos go out upon the ice to watch for the seal and walrus. The icefield, as viewed from the shore, looks innocent enough, and might induce any lover of the pastime of snowshoeing, or perchance skating, to venture out without suspicion. He would be safe so long only, however, as the wind blows inshore, for the icefield is a vagrant thing that will start with an offshore wind, and go out to sea. Woe to him who is caught in this way! Even if provided with a kayak, the danger is scarcely diminished, since the float-

ing detached fields of ice whirling about and rushing together are likely to crush any craft, no matter how skilful the management of it.

Ualick, his wife, and Ualicson had joined the nearest village. They joined, too, in the hunt with all the ardour of men who had experienced nothing but the smiles of fortune, instead of her most savage frowns; and both men were particularly fortunate, as if indeed fate, that had been so lately against them, now wished to heap favours upon their devoted heads.

These pieces of good luck were not, however, without being attended by many narrow escapes. On one occasion, as father and son sat waiting for a monster of the deep to shake his mighty head and clamber out of the hole before them upon the ice, the wind shifted suddenly, and though the women sentinels on shore fired the warning guns as usual, yet the change was so sudden that the ice, being ready, began to move before they reached the shore; and though they ran some distance down, hoping to find a place where it had not parted, they were at last compelled to throw off as much of their clothing as they dared, and plunge into the icy water. The swim was not a long one, but what it lacked in length it made up in danger. As they reached the shore the water was already freezing upon their skin dress and stiffening it up, but by dint of the exercise of their surplus strength they reached their snow-house safe and sound, to be well taken care of by Ualick's dear little wife. As it was, however, they lost a fine spear and a harpoon which Ualick valued very much.

After a wait of two days, which to the Eskimos is a good deal like imprisonment for that space of time, the wind having changed, the ice came back and anchored as securely as if it had never left. The Eskimos were soon galloping with their dog-sleds over the smooth surface of the ice-field, and this time ventured out farther, putting up their igloes in anticipation of a longer visit. Ualick and his son resumed their vigil over a large air-hole, and soon a huge walrus stuck his head through and clambered up. He roared in glee like a lion, as indeed he is, being called the sea-lion, and whacked the ice with his enormous flippers and tail. His scowling visage turned about in various directions to take a glance at the landscape, when suddenly there was a puff of smoke, and he rolled over dead. However, the hunters approached him cautiously, as it is not always safe to take these savage brutes for dead till proven so. But he was as dead as the proverbial door-nail. His tusks were very large and perfect. He was soon cut up and borne away to the igloo, where the neighbours gloated over their prospective shares in the profits of his carcass, while Ualick and his son went back to look for more.

As we have already said, the hunt was a very successful one. In every direction the spear was darting like a flash of lightning down into the inquisitive seal, who perchance poked up his nose to see what was going on or to get a breath of fresh air. Now and then a walrus would fall a victim, but this good fortune usually comes to the more renowned and daring hunters only. At the extreme

edge of another icefield, which was not more than a mile distant from where they were standing, Ualicsen descried a white object moving southward upon an icefloe. It was beyond doubt a bear, and the two hunters set off in the direction of it. As they drew near, the bear, who had been lying down, rose on his haunches and looked round. Ualicsen dropped on his right knee, and, taking careful aim, fired. The bear rolled over without a struggle. But the question now was, how to get him to the icefield upon which they themselves were. The icefloe was carrying the bear slowly but surely out into the open sea. To go back for a kayak would take too long. Ualicsen made a suggestion to his father, whereupon they set to work to disconnect a block from the edge of their own icefield. This they were not long in doing, when Ualicsen jumped aboard of it and shoved off in the direction of the bear. Old Ualick, more sagacious, if not quite so ingenious as his son, instantly bethought himself of how Ualicsen was to get back, and running to his harpoon, picked it up. Calling to his son to look out, he threw it skilfully, and Ualicsen caught it. To the harpoon string Ualick now tied, at his leisure, some of the various bits of string which an old hunter usually carries about him; and by the time the slow-moving icefloe had been propelled by the spear, used as a paddle, up to the bear, the improvised painter was found to be not too long. Ualicsen transferred himself and his line to the icefloe of the bear, and called to his father to pull away. With much tugging and a great deal of laughter the tow was completed, and Ualick

and his son had the pleasure of feasting their eyes upon the carcass of as fine a bear as one could wish to see. The monster could not have weighed less than six hundred pounds.

First one and then another of the Eskimos in the distance caught sight of the hunters busily engaged, and in a short time all the inhabitants of the village then upon the icefield were running to see what they had, the first arrivals crying out in delight, and those not yet arrived catching up the cries. Surely Providence had blessed them; but, poor creatures, unlike their wiser brethren of the white face, they did not know how to bottle up their good fortune for future use; and whilst all revelled in delights of an arctic feast, nothing would remain to mark the bountiful harvest of food but the skins of bear, seal, and walrus, which would be carried in due time to the fort for barter.

One day not long after this Ualicson was seated over an air-hole, watching as still as death for the appearance of some denizen of the deep, when suddenly his arm shot up, and the harpoon flew down into the water. Quick as lightning he sprang to his feet, and, driving his spear into a crack in the ice, twisted the harpoon-rope round it. In less time than it takes to tell it this was accomplished, and none too soon, for the rope was taut directly after. Ualicson then pushed the snub-loop down to the level of the ice, by which his leverage and security became so much the greater. Meanwhile, he waited patiently, catching hold of the rope now and then to see if it were slack-

ening. It did slacken, and he began to pull away, but very warily. Presently a horn stuck out of the water, but quickly disappeared again, and the rope flew off the ice, while Ualicson held firmly to the spear, pressing it down into the ice-crack. This proceeding was repeated two or three times, but at last the narwhal came to the surface, and lay upon its side completely exhausted. It was now Ualicson's turn. Disengaging the spear, he threw it again with great skill and force, and it struck the narwhal fairly this time, entering deeply into its side. It gave a shudder or two but no more, and Ualicson pulled it over to the edge of the ice. Fastening the harpoon-rope in its jaws, he then wound it round his hands, and by dint of a tremendous effort, for Ualicson was quite as strong as his father, he succeeded in hauling the big fish out upon the ice. The reader may think this an impossible task, but it was not so, because the water upon the skin of the dead fish freezing as it emerged formed a sort of icy skid-way, and enabled Ualicson to do what under other circumstances it would have been quite impossible for him to accomplish. Ualicson's pride was great but pardonable. What a triumph it would be for him to return to the village of his adopted tribe the slayer, single-handed, of the savage narwhal! Then, too, there were other reasons than the applause of the Eskimo public for his feelings of pleasure. There was an Eskimo belle by whom his attentions were received with approval, and his heart beat fast under its double covering of skin as he pictured to himself her look of wonder and admiration. As he walked across

the ice he indulged in a song, the words of which were to the effect that Ohataic was the finest girl in Labrador. Nor would his singing have offended the ear of a more refined belle, for the voices of the Eskimos are soft and pleasant, though the tone is monotonous. Ualick was proud of his son when he heard what he had done, and with Otalic to help, they got their sled, and went back to where the narwhal was lying, its long horn promising a variety of ornaments. The three men soon had it on the sled, and being met by the whole village, almost without exception, not counting, of course, the old people, the re-entry partook largely of a triumphal march, and Ualickson was the hero of the hour.

After a successful hunt, the Eskimos—that is, those who have not embraced Christianity—hold what is known as the Feast of the Dead. Their acknowledgments of their good fortune are best made, they think, by offerings of food, which is of all things the most precious to primitive races, especially those in cold climates. A long procession was now formed, the old men at the head, the middle-aged carrying the offerings next, and lastly the young women and children. It wound its way slowly to the village burial-ground. The Eskimo dead are merely placed upon the frozen ground, or, if the ground is not frozen, as it sometimes is not, to the depth of a foot or so the earth is scooped out, and in these shallow holes the bodies are laid. Liberal offerings of food were placed upon these graves for the benefit of the spirits of the departed and for the guardian-gods of the living. A simple prayer or

two was uttered, and then the procession returned to the village. Prowling beasts, as may well be supposed, are not long in scenting out the food and removing it; but the Eskimos ascribe its disappearance to the good will of the spirits, who are supposed to have accepted it. The terrible catastrophe which we have described in a preceding chapter, resulting in the death from starvation of more than a score of their kin, weighed heavily upon the Eskimos, and they were especially anxious to know if the spirits of evil had been appeased by these offerings. They were highly pleased therefore when the signal success of the hunt was followed up by their sudden disappearance. It is needless to remark that Ualick, his wife, and son, who were Christians, took no part in these pagan rites.

The wind having changed, it was now necessary for the Eskimos to wait its change back again, or to engage in a hunt inland. Ualickson spent his spare time in making a pipe of ivory out of the narwhal's horn for Jack Ralston, to whom he wished to make a present, out of gratitude for his rescue. With primitive tools it was an arduous task, but the patience of the truly grateful is not easily exhausted, and two days saw the finish of an Eskimo work of art that would have done credit to many a more pretentious artist.

The village which Ualick had joined was likewise the one with which Nanoak had identified himself, though he was scarcely ever in it. He was greatly beloved by his adopted countrymen, however, for not only had his strong arm on more than one occasion, as we have seen,

been of no immaterial aid, but his knowledge of the ways and habits of providence of the white man had on several occasions been of great assistance to them. Yet even to them Nanoak was more or less of a mystery. No doubt, dear reader, you have experienced feelings of almost superstitious awe when, under the influence of the temperature and light of what may best be described as peculiar weather, especially in winter, your imagination has seemed wrought up into a state of fascination and excitement that is more like a state of communing with the spirits of the air, as it were, than with your own fellow-beings. Such feelings, or changes of feelings, are most common in wildernesses and lonely places of the Labrador type. Men of strong character often become moody, and fancy all sorts of strange and unaccountable things. So was it with Nanoak, who, in Labrador and in Montreal, was two distinct and different beings. The lonely man is apt also to nurse feelings of revenge which in civilized centres would soon be laughed out of existence.

With this hint of future events, in which the little community of souls which we have just described will come into some degree of prominence, we shall leave the reader for the present, in order that we may enlist his attention in an egg-hunting expedition, in which Jack Ralston takes a prominent part.

Chapter XIV.

AN EGG-HUNTING EXPEDITION.

IT was now well on in the spring of the year, and as the Ungava broke up in June, sometimes early in the month and sometimes towards the middle of it, preparations were being made at the post for a trip to the islands in quest of the eggs of the great variety of ducks inhabiting that region, and breeding there, and of the gulls. The egg of the eider-duck is especially relished for its delicate flavour. It has no yolk, and this also is the case with the gull's egg. In addition to the egg of the eider-duck, there was also the down of that bird to be secured, which, as every one knows, is highly prized for its warmth, when made up into quilts and other coverings. Jack was captain of the expedition, and Pilo, M'Diarmid, Mowat, and Sambo were chosen to go with him—Jack and Mowat in one boat, the other three in the other. M'Diarmid, when he heard of the arrangement, swore on the word of a Scot that he would never set foot in a boat with Sambo in it; but as this would necessitate an entire change of plans if insisted upon, M'Diarmid held his peace, preferring to suffer rather than be put down in Mr. Paterson's books as a turbulent and mutinous character.

The eventful day of departure at last arrived. A strong wind during the night had driven the ice out of the river. Orders were given to make everything ready. A stock of provisions was quickly put aboard, and the crews followed. Mr. Paterson and Linda went down to the wharf to see the expedition set out. Sambo was stationed at one of the oars, but not paying proper attention, or rather paying attention to the wrong things, his oar caught a crab, and douched M'Diarmid from head to foot just as they were getting under way. The Scotsman dropped his oar and began to swear, at which Jack remonstrated. Jack fancied that he saw Mr. Paterson laughing.

The big river carried swiftly along an immense number of blocks of ice, and these were very menacing, since an eddy might whirl one at any moment against a boat and smash it in. At the mouth of the river they found Eskimos on the same errand as themselves, and these poor creatures were very glad to get a present of a few pipefuls of tobacco.

The course lay north-east by east to a group of islands or rather island-rocks, where, in the rocky crevices, secure from the tempest and the sea, the birds lay their eggs. These islands have numerous basins of fresh water, in which the feathered tribe bathe and disport themselves. Though bare to all intents and purposes, the islands yet afford cover enough for the fox, who hunts up the nests of the birds, and frequently anticipates the egg-hunter. From the mouth of the river to this group the distance is between forty and fifty miles, the larger portion of

which is swept by in-going and out-going currents from Hudson Strait. Here also are dangerous icefloes, and the boats had many narrow escapes, especially Pilo's, in which the volatile Sambo formed half of the rowing crew.

"It's looking very black, Pilo," said Jack as he drew alongside, pointing to the west, where a dark cloud bespoke wind and perhaps rain.

"It ees, monsieur. De wint blow hard very soon," said Pilo, and almost as he spoke a puff came down, and the waves began to rise ominously.

M'Diarmid and Sambo were at the oars. Every minute the difficulty of navigating became greater. Suddenly a huge wave caught the boat broadside and turned her over. The seriousness of the situation was soon apparent. M'Diarmid and Pilo were excellent swimmers, but not so with poor Sambo. With the instinct of self-preservation strong upon him, however, he seized his ancient enemy around the neck, and it was only by the greatest effort and promptitude that Jack and Mowat were able to rescue them from going down to a watery grave without further delay. When the well-nigh fatal embrace had been broken, M'Diarmid took hold of the bow of Jack's boat, while Jack held out an oar to Sambo, to which the negro clung with the tenacity of desperation. Pilo, under Jack's direction, swam to the bow of the capsized boat and swung it round, so that Jack could reach the stern. With a few trifling exceptions, all the stores, ammunition, and guns of the capsized boat had gone to the bottom of the sea, which, as if satisfied with its work for the present, did not send

up any further billows to overwhelm the boatmen, confining itself to an even and regular roll. With Pilo at one end to steady it, Jack, by a skilful movement, aided by the roll of the waves, was able to right the recreant craft. Pilo then secured the oars, which were tossing about near at hand. M'Diarmid and Sambo had been hauled aboard Jack's boat, after which Pilo clambered like a cat over the stem of the righted boat, and held her alongside till M'Diarmid and Sambo got in. It was a narrow escape, and the question now was whether to go on or to turn back. Jack decided, after consultation with the others, that they had still provisions enough to try their luck with, and had better go on. Sambo was ordered to lie down in the after part of the boat, and on no account to interfere with the navigation in any way, for the capsizing was in some measure his fault. The poor fellow was too thoroughly frightened by his late experience to say a word, or even to notice the remarks addressed to him, half under his breath, by the enraged Scotsman. Though the water was bitterly cold, the air was quite temperate, and two of the lately immersed ones found no difficulty, with the help of their exertions at the oars, in keeping fairly warm. With cold and fright combined, Sambo's teeth, however, chattered as if he were in a frenzy of biting.

By sundown they were in sight of their destination, having been fourteen hours on the way. The long twilight seemed reluctant to come to an end. They drew into a nice little bay, well sheltered from the waves, and beached

the boats. Jack at first directed Sambo to collect the firewood, but he afterwards decided that they had all better set out on that errand; and in a short time their united exertions in gathering it were rewarded by a pile of driftwood, which previous storms had washed up along-shore, and which was quite dry. Great was the general satisfaction as the flames shot up and filled the air with a delightful warmth. M'Diarmid and Pilo sat by the fire wrapped in blankets, their clothes drying near by; but Sambo vowed positively that his clothes were already dry, and as he seemed anxious to make up for his mishap by doing some cooking, he was allowed to have his way, and soon produced a very appetizing meal of salt pork, bread, coffee, and sea-biscuit. The scene was by no means a cheerless one. Sambo worked like a Trojan, but wore an apprehensive look, as if he suspected that there would be an official inquiry into his late conduct in connection with the upsetting of the boat.

Suddenly Jack burst out laughing as he lay on his back near the fire.

"It was a narrow escape, wasn't it, M'Diarmid?" said he, turning good-humouredly to the Scotsman, who nursed his wrath and scowled savagely at Sambo from time to time.

"Yes, sir, it was; and no thanks to that —— nigger, beggin' your pardon, sir."

"No swearing, M'Diarmid," said Jack gently. "I know you have great provocation, but you must not transgress rules."

"I am very sorry, sir," replied M'Diarmid, and as the note in his voice showed that he had not transgressed the rules intentionally, Jack dropped that part of the subject.

"What did you think of first, when you upset?" continued Jack, whose object was to promote conversation, and restore the good spirits of the men.

"I thought of my gun first, and then of Sambo. I took it bad to think I cudna get my fingers on the cause of all our trouble—with my fine gun goin' down to the bottom, and my knife, which, with my smokin' utensils, exceptin' my pipe, were all on their way to Davy Jones's locker."

"And what did you think of, Pilo?"

"I tink if she (pointing to Sambo) only keep on we'll all be drowned yit."

A shout of laughter arose at Pilo's energetic and philosophical way of putting his feelings.

"Well, men, I know Sambo did his best and not his worst, and I shall serve out a dram of grog, and we'll bury our grudge against poor Sambo," said Jack.

Sambo was a picture of perplexity and kindness as he sat nursing his knees and rocking to and fro. Jack walked over to the tin box, drew a dram for each out of his scanty store, and handed it to the men, who stood up, took off their caps, and respectfully drank his health. It was getting on into the night by this time, and as the search for eggs and down had to be conducted with speed on account of the diminished stock of provisions, all turned in early. The day had been characterized by such a variety of perils and pleasures that the tired voyagers retired to rest with no

other care than a wish to be left undisturbed; but Sambo was ill at ease, and broke his own and others' slumber with occasional frantic cries of "Help! help!" Each time quiet was restored by giving him a clap on the back, or a whack on the side of the head; but it was well on towards the early dawn before the deep, heavy snoring of the whole party gave evidence of that sweet sleep which is so refreshing to tired men.

The first peep of dawn found Mowat astir, creeping stealthily about the boats and looking to the packages lest some string had worked loose and was endangering the contents. Sambo jerked his head up suddenly as sleep vanished from his eyes, and bounded to his feet like a rocket, afraid, no doubt, that he had been guilty of some other lapse. But a signal from Mowat quieted him, and he sat down to muse again upon the events of the day before and his narrow escape from death. In another moment or so, however, all were awake, and the change from quietude to the busy hum of preparations for breakfast and the day's work was complete.

"What do you think of the weather, Mowat?" inquired Jack, who made it an invariable rule to begin each day by settling what the weather was to be.

"Good, sir. The east and south are clear," said Mowat, running his eye round the rim of earth and sky.

"Very well; then let us get away early, for we must see what our luck is to be without delay."

If anything could have atoned for Sambo's blunders, his cooking was undoubtedly that thing. The coffee was ex-

cellent and most refreshing, and even M'Diarmid had to admit that Sambo's coffee and anybody else's were two entirely different things.

Since Pilo's and the extra gun had been lost, it was decided that for that day Pilo should keep camp with Sambo, though M'Diarmid would have been obliged to yield place to Pilo, had it not been a certainty that he and Sambo would quarrel if left together. Besides, M'Diarmid might have saved his gun if it had not been that Jack had given him an order while in the water which deprived him of the chance of doing so.

The egg-hunters climbed briskly over the granite hummocks in quest of anything good that might turn up. With the exception of a scrubby fir here and there in the cracks of the rocks, there was no vegetable shelter whatever. Immense flocks of ducks of all kinds and varieties arose at their approach, and in two hours the whole party was on its way back to camp—M'Diarmid laden with eggs, Mowat with the down of the eider-duck gathered from the nests, and Jack with as many of the birds themselves as he could carry. Though eggs were plentiful, foxes had played havoc with many nests. The next meal was a hearty one, the best of fare being provided, and Sambo cooked like a *chef*. Mowat stayed at home next time with Sambo, and Pilo took his turn. The party had soon collected all that the boats could carry, and as the weather did not look quite so settled for a long stay as it had, Jack gave orders that the return voyage should begin without delay.

Fort Hope was made without mishap. Mr. Paterson met them at the wharf. He nodded his head and smiled approvingly as Jack pointed out to him the ample store which they had succeeded in bagging. Mr. Paterson gave a few directions as to their disposal, and then quietly taking Jack by the arm he walked towards the fort.

"I have been thinking over the proposed trip into the unexplored regions while you were away, Jack, and I should like you to take a party with you in that direction at once. The rivers and lakes will have broken up by this time, and with expedition and care you may go some distance this season, if you find the waterways I expect."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, proud of being chosen to lead a party of exploration.

"Come in with me to-morrow morning, and we can then make out a list of what you should take with you," continued Mr. Paterson.

"Very well, sir," said Jack. "I should like to take Mowat and Pilo with me, if I may. I find they are both intelligent and reliable."

"Yes, you may; and as that would mean two canoes, you had better take M'Diarmid or Morrison."

"Morrison is the better man, isn't he, sir?"

"Well, I see you think him so," said Mr. Paterson, laughing, "so you may have him."

"Do you know how to take your true astronomical bearings, Jack?"

Jack was compelled to admit that he did not.

"Oh, well, it doesn't very much matter; only, of course,

it is necessary for you to keep tab by the compass and the stars, so that you can tell us where you have been when you get back, and you know I want a fair idea of what the lie of the land is, so that I may be able to draw up a map."

Jack now felt very much as if it were his duty to back out.

"I am afraid, Mr. Paterson, that I do not know enough about these things to undertake the responsibility. I shouldn't like to make a failure of it."

"No, Jack, nor should I want you to make a complete failure of it; but, you see, if you don't go there is no one to go, for I cannot leave the post, and, besides, you can find out, as we said before, what the country is like, at any rate. I am more anxious to find that out than anything else, and you say you have some idea of minerals."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, "though I cannot boast in that direction either."

"Very well. Get ready then—that is the next thing; and the more you succeed in doing, the better will the Company and myself be pleased."

Jack spent the evening in the society of Linda. It is needless to remark upon the pleasure it gave him to be in the company of one so beautiful and so charming. Many a time the idea had rushed into his head of declaring his love for her then and there, but a certain sense of shamefacedness at not having yet shown himself to be a man fully grown and of some reputation restrained him. But if he should succeed in his present undertaking, he fully made up his mind to lay himself at the feet of her in whom his

future was so completely bound up. Yet, at the same time, a certain misgiving forced itself upon him with regard to it, for Linda had not shown any marked degree of affection for him; but then, had he not read of girls acting in just the same way, when it was their modesty and not their lukewarmness that actuated them? But the heart of man, especially of every young man, is filled with hope in the future, and our hero's was not an exception.

"What do you think of doing when you start?" asked Mrs. Paterson, viewing with a critical eye the work she had in hand.

"Making for the Unknown Lands, Mrs. Paterson," replied Jack.

"Yes, so Mr. Paterson told me. Do you go up or down?"

"We go west, as soon as possible, to the height of land, and then north on the Cat River, or at least on one of those branching into the Larch," answered Jack.

"Have you made all your preparations?"

"We finish them to-morrow, Mrs. Paterson. Everything is in shape—canoes, provisions, and ammunition—and I have told the men."

"You are not going to take Sambo, I hope," said Mrs. Paterson, laughing. "We did not know what to do without him yesterday. We were to have had soup, but had to do without it."

"Oh no," said Jack, who could not help laughing himself at the thought of being encumbered with poor Sambo.

"Well, I am sure Linda and I wish you every success.—Don't we, Linda?"

"By all means, mother. But I hope Jack will get back before the ship comes, if I am to go away in it."

This was said only in jest, but Linda had little idea how it cut Jack to the heart.

"Are you really going away, then?" he ventured to inquire.

"I don't know, I am sure," she said, giving her pretty head a shake indicative of the gravity of the situation.

Jack would have given a good deal to have had this frightful uncertainty set at rest; but Mrs. Paterson, toward whom he looked, unfortunately was taken up with giving orders to Sambo for the following day. When she had finished, somehow his courage had failed him, and he finished the evening in dreadful doubt. He said good-night with a heavy heart, and bearing a remote degree of resentment against fate and the world generally.

Chapter XV.

TAKEN CAPTIVE BY INDIANS.

THE eventful day of departure for the great lone land arrived. The canoes were packed quickly. It does not take men very long to prepare for a journey or a voyage in the Hudson Bay Company's service. Everything is ready to hand, and in the case of travelling in canoes it is not a matter of how much but of how little to take. Mrs. Paterson and Linda went down with Mr. Paterson to see them off. Jack was in the bow of one canoe, with his ever trusty friend Mowat in the stern. This plan was adopted not only on account of the half-breed's superior knowledge of the handling of a canoe in running water and difficult places, but because it gave Jack the opportunity which he required of running his eye over the surrounding country and noting the physical features, for Mr. Paterson's benefit. In order also to take the strain of keeping lookout off his mind, it was arranged that Pilo and the Orkneyman should keep a short distance in advance. As the two canoes lay off the wharf ready to start, the whole scene made quite a pretty picture. It was nearly noon of a long June day. Birds were flying north in great numbers, and the air resounded

with their cries. The sun shed an all-pervading brightness over mountain, plain, and stream. Linda, too, was gay with all the light-heartedness of youth, although a serious look came over her face now and then for a moment as she gazed upon the whirling water.

"Are you sure you've got everything—guns, ammunition, and knives?" inquired Mr. Paterson.

"Yes, sir, I think so," replied Jack, running his eye over both canoes, and clapping his hand thoughtfully on his belt, where he was accustomed to keep his knife.

"Well, then, good-bye," said Mr. Paterson.

Jack gave the word, and the graceful craft moved slowly and smoothly out into the swiftly-moving river.

"Good-bye," cried both Mrs. Paterson and Linda, waving their hands and handkerchiefs. "Good-bye," answered Jack, as he leaned upon his paddle and turned to lift his cap. Thinking it a sign of weakness, Jack did not again look round, although he would have given a good deal to have done so; and to the measured dip, dip of the paddles the canoes glided away.

Pilo, as an old and reliable *voyageur*, was practically entrusted with the pilotage. None knew better than he, not even Mowat, how to take the birch-barks over treacherous places, and how to steer them against the eddying currents of wind that, coming down rivers and through gullies, entwine themselves together like snakes, or whirl about the mouths of rivers and streams, where the canoeist meets them often to his own or his canoe's destruction. The country or rather mountain-ranges along the river

were, of course, not new ; and beyond an occasional glance upward at the sky by the paddlers to see how the weather was, and how it was likely to be, or to see a flight of river ducks taking a day's outing in search of food, nothing interrupted the even movement of the heavily-laden canoes. Jack had thought to reach the Little Larch, a tributary of the Ungava River, and up which they intended to take their way and begin their journey inland, by at least an hour before sunset ; but such was not the case.

"I think we had better draw rein hereabouts," said Jack to Mowat. "It's no good attempting anything to-night, and we must be near the mouth of the Little Larch, anyhow."

Mowat agreed that it was the best thing to do ; and Jack hailed Pilo, who was holding back, evidently with a view to some such order, and told him to pull up. A delightful little spot on the right bank presented itself, and the two canoes moved shoreward. It was indeed an enchanting spot. A patch of delicious green grass, such as the homely cow would have revelled in, lay, in a plot of about half an acre, upon the top of a low portion of the bank, and was so nearly level with the water that it was overflowed at spring flood, the tide not being felt so far up, and thus furnished with enough moisture to keep it green till late in the summer. Round about it in a half-circle lay a rampart of immense boulders, cleft in places as if by some long-gone volcanic convulsion, and twigs of green peeped out through the crevices, whilst a jet of water about the size of a man's arm spouted out of one and fell in a shower

of dazzling beauty, and then ran quickly away along the base of the rocks into the great stream itself.

The waterproofs were undone, and a blanket each taken out of the bundles. A few dry twigs on the beach served to start the fire, and in half an hour coffee, biscuit, and dried fish had been disposed of and pipes were going. He would be a truly unimaginative mortal who could not enjoy the sight of these happy contented travellers on their journey into the unknown wilderness stopping for a bite of bread, a cup of coffee, and a puff of their beloved pipes, all snugly ensconced in a spot of romantic beauty, where the low murmur of the river furnished the sweet slumber-song of rest.

At early dawn—that is about half-past two—they were up, and, after breakfast, they packed away their few wraps and the cooking, eating, and drinking tins. They had resumed their journey but a minute or two when Pilo stopped and waited for the rear canoe.

"Well, what is it, Pilo?" asked Jack.

"I dink dis is de Leetle Larch," said Pilo, pointing to a gap in the shore.

"Are you sure, Pilo? You know we can't take any risks," said Jack, somewhat startled.

"Oui, monsieur. I'm sure. Dere is de larch dat dey call it by," replied Pilo, who was astonished that any one should think him guessing at the very outset of the journey, and in such a well-known place—at least to him.

Jack then directed him to begin the ascent, and accordingly they once more moved inshore. The larch is a tree very suitable to this high latitude, and grows in abundance

along the river which bears its name. The current was not nearly so swift as Jack had supposed, but Mowat said that in June the flood was pretty well over. A number of sleepy-looking partridges were seen; but as it would have been a pity to waste ammunition on them, when a stick would do as well, Mowat was put ashore, and creeping stealthily upon them he came back in a few minutes with an armful. These would make a delicious supper at the day's end, and Jack smacked his lips at the thought of stewed partridge, seasoned with salt pork and a good appetite, followed by a pipe of tobacco. The Little Larch gradually grew narrower and shallower, and would not have been navigable at all, even for the shallow birch-bark, on account of the numbers of flat rocks just reaching to the surface of the water, if it had not been for the little channels which the water, swirling in and out amongst the rocks, had made for itself, and which Pilo discovered from time to time and followed up with great skill. Though the route was circuitous, it was surprising what progress was made; and Jack found himself fully occupied in assisting the helmsman by judicious and timely sweeps of his single-bladed paddle, without which it is quite impossible to travel in narrow and difficult waters. The Little Larch doubtless derived its supply of water from the hills at the height of land, and it was towards this spot that Jack was travelling. Once at the height of land, another stream was sure to be found running down the opposite way into the interior. The weather, which hitherto had been beautiful, now gave evidence of turning wet, which of all things is

the most unpleasant to the explorer. It is necessary, if the rain be at all copious, to disembark frequently and pour the water out of the canoes; while in the course of continued rain the provisions and bedding, no matter how well protected, are almost certain to become damp.

Brooks fed the Little Larch at intervals, and furnished excellent sport for Mowat and the Orkneyman, who never failed to have a cast when fish were needed, and it is needless to say that trout were plentiful. Jack took a hand in the sport one day, and by way of attempting something worth recording in his diary, put on no less than five hooks. Will the reader believe it? He caught no less than five fish at the first cast, and he regretted that he had not put more hooks on, resolving, however, to do so at another time.

The shores now became more open as they went along, and a view from the top of a high hill showed a country comparatively easy to explore, and the trees along the river-banks became fewer and smaller as the party advanced towards the height of land.

Jack had strained his back a little in lifting the canoe over a small portage without taking the load out; but feeling it his duty to have an exploration made, as directed by his chief, he determined to confide it to Mowat, on the left bank, and to Morrison on the right. Accordingly, at the first nice spot for a sojourn of a few days, he ordered the camp to be pitched. An older head would have put off the exploration till the return trip, as it was much more important that it should be made of the far interior than of the land lying, comparatively speaking,

adjacent to the Ungava River. This idea did occur to him later.

It will be remembered that Mowat was a Scotch half-breed, half Scotch and half Indian, his mother being, it was said, a member of the Dacotahs or Sioux. As a consequence, the moment he entered the woods he became Indian again, and partook of all the caution and wariness of that denizen of the wood and master of woodcraft. About two miles from the river the forest began again, although it did not yet become continuous or unbroken. As Mowat was walking quietly along, taking notes with his eye of the appearance of the country, he was startled by seeing a thin shaft of smoke ascending lazily to the sky. It was evident that the country was inhabited. The smoke was rising over the edge of a cliff near a little patch of wood. Going through the wood to the base of the hill, he ascended it, and lying down at the edge looked over the cliff. He remained in this position for some time reconnoitring, and then returned to the camp.

"Hullo, Mowat, what has brought you back so soon?" inquired Jack, as the athletic half-breed stalked into camp.

"I have seen a party of Nauscopees," answered Mowat.

"Well, what of that? Do they mean mischief?"

"I think so, sir. One does not find Indians without their women and children in summer-time unless they are bent on business and not pleasure."

"Humph!" ejaculated Jack, looking at Mowat again to see if he were really serious; but serious he seemed to be. "And does this mean that they may attack us?"

"I cannot say, sir. If we move on before they see us it may not happen, but if they see our camping-place here they may follow us if they mean mischief."

"Couldn't you find out, Mowat, what they do mean?" asked Jack, determined to see if Mowat's suspicions were well-founded, or only the result of heredity and force of habit.

"Yes, sir; I think so," assented the half-breed.

"Well, then, do so. When shall it be?"

"The best way to do it is for you to wait here, sir, and keep watch. If they remain in this part they will discover us within a few days, and then we can find out without appearing to wish to know," remarked the half-breed, showing his knowledge of the Indian character.

"Very well," said Jack; "let it be as you say. We can spare a day or two. We have made pretty good time so far."

Jack was sitting under a tree writing up his diary during the cool of the delicious summer evening. He expected Morrison, and now and then threw a glance across the stream to see if he appeared. At last the well-known head and shoulders of the Orkneyman, bending forward, as was his custom, at each stroke of the paddle, came in sight. He drew up to the shore and stepped out. After pulling up his canoe he walked over to the tree where Jack was sitting at work.

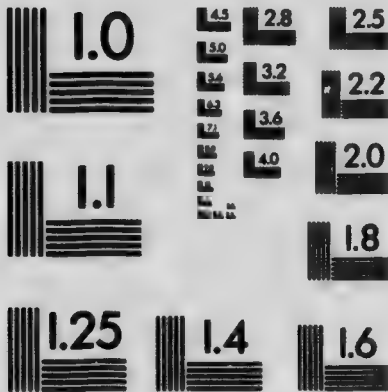
"Well, what about the right bank?" said Jack, laying down his diary upon his knee.

"It's a queer country, Mr. Ralston. There's naethin'



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but rocks and a few trees and wee streams and sich like."

"Do you think there's any chance of gold, or coal, or any of the other minerals?"

"I do not," replied Morrison; "and to be candid with ye, sir, I don't believe there's anythin' there but what I have telled ye."

"Did you get a good view of the country?" queried Jack, getting ready to take notes.

"I did of a part of it. There's a high hill, and then another, and by climbin' one and then the other ye can get a tolerable view of the lie of the land to the east; and I could see the river on the south, but as for the north or west I could see naethin' for the hill."

"Well, why didn't you go round to the other side of the hill?"

"Because I couldn't get," said Morrison, half angrily, as if any one would suppose that he was such a fool as not to have thought of that.

"Did you pick up any specimens?"

"I did," said the Orkneyman quietly, feeling in his pockets. "There's some, though I don't pretend to know what they are."

Jack took them, and looked attentively at them for a few moments, but there was nothing in them of a startling nature. In fact, they were nothing but splinters of granite and sandstone. He threw them to one side, and proceeded to write out his report. Morrison sat down near at hand, to be of service in furnishing the required information.

His face was turned towards Jack, who put a question to him occasionally. Suddenly Jack looked up, conscious of some one's approach.

"An Indian, by Jove!" he exclaimed, as a tall, crafty-looking Indian stalked up to him. Jack waited for him to speak.

"Good-day," grunted the newcomer, whom Jack thought he recognized as one of those who had come to the fort, and who knew a little English.

"Good-day," said Jack.

"White man go fishing?" asked the Indian with a cunning leer.

"No," said Jack, resolved not to tell an untruth at all hazards, rightly believing that it was better to suffer for telling the truth than to be a coward.

The Indian paused, and a dark cloud flitted over his face.

"White man go hunt? Indian can help," suggested the red man.

"No," said Jack again; "we are going exploring up into the north country."

"That way you go?" asked the Indian, pointing to the north.

"Yes," said Jack.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the Indian, who then pulled out a pipe and looked suggestively at Jack. Glad to get off with a request with which it was so easy to comply, Jack pulled out a plug, which he kept as a reserve in his coat pocket, and gave it to the Indian. The latter took

it, and turned on his heel without even saying "thank you."

"A curious-looking chap that," said Jack.

"Yes, sir. He has come to find out all about us. It will be well to keep a watch on our things. They'll steal all we have if we take no care," said Morris.

Mowat came along at this juncture.

"Where have you been, Mowat? We wanted you to talk to a Nauscopee. He's gone now. One of the crew sighted over the cliff, I suppose. He asked me where we were going, and I gave him some of his beloved weed."

"I went down along the river bank, sir. I thought I might pick up something. Did you tell him where we were going, sir?" ventured Mowat.

"Yes. Why?" said Jack.

"It's a pity, sir. They may make trouble, and will steal."

"Well, we'll have to risk that. I depend on you three. Here's Pilo. He's good for a whole tribe. Look here, Mowat; if you think it a good thing to do, I wish you would take another tramp over to that camp and find out what they are doing."

Mowat went away as directed, but without his rifle, considering it bad policy to go armed, in view of the pretence made by the Nauscopee of being on a peaceful errand.

This time he went by a different and roundabout way, thinking that the Indians, if their intentions were bad, would be on the watch.

A little to the north of the white men's camp was a clump of trees. When Mowat had gained this, he saw several similar clumps on the opposite side, reaching round like an arm and encircling the camp of the Indians. He crept cautiously along, taking shelter where he could behind these trees, and crawling through the long grass on all fours where it was open. In this way, in the course of a couple of hours, he reached a point where he had once more a view of the Indian camp. The red men were evidently making ready to take their departure. Two Indians were taking down the skin tents, and the fires had been allowed to burn out. No others were visible. Where were they? They might have gone hunting, or on a less peaceful mission. Though under the circumstances it was like courting danger, yet if he could only get near enough to hear these two talking to each other, Mowat felt he could soon find out what really was going on. So, crawling on hands and knees, worming along like a snake, he reached a point not more than ten yards from the nearest tent, and listened. Yes, they were Nauscopees. At least, these two were. They were chuckling over some event that was about to happen, and laughing and cackling like a pair of loons, but not noisily. Beyond this, however, the half-breed learned nothing. Presently there passed by him, so close that he could almost have touched him, one of the returning Nauscopees. He carried a rabbit and a few partridges, but his face had a few irregular streaks of black and vermilion, indicative of anything but pacific preparations. He threw

the rabbit and partridges on the ground, and went to where his tent lay in a heap. He picked up something, and began sharpening his long knife with it, trying the edge with his fingers repeatedly. A few feathers stuck in his long straight hair nodded every time he raised or lowered his head. At last the keenness of the edge seemed to satisfy him, for he gave a grunt of satisfaction and replaced it in his belt. But Mowat wanted to learn more. He had not yet seen enough to warrant him in returning to camp and alarming the party. The chuck, chuck, of a blackbird near at hand startled him. It was repeated. He waited anxiously and watched the Indian who had been sharpening his knife. After the lapse of a few moments the sounds were repeated, and the returned Indian answered them. There was no mistaking where the answering sounds came from. He was discovered. Mowat felt sure of that. The hunter now said something to the other Indians, who proceeded to relight one of the fires and to put up a tent, while he disappeared, returning into view shortly after with a clean face, and taking a prominent position, so that he could be readily seen from any direction. Two others now emerged from the woods and stepped into the open, chanting gaily one of their monotonous songs. One of them had a large fish, which he carried on a stick stuck through its gills and slung over his shoulder. They did not go up to the others, or speak to them in the ordinary way, but, throwing down the fish and their weapons, began to smoke lazily, and to call out in a laughing way for something to eat. It was

useless to wait longer; and feeling that his suspicions were no nearer being satisfactorily cleared up than before, Mowat crept back to camp.

"What did you see?" inquired Jack Ralston anxiously.

"I saw the same camp, sir, and they were making preparations to leave when I reached it. I think I was discovered, though they did not let on."

"Do you think they mean to follow us up and attack us?"

"I don't know, sir. It would be well to keep a watch at night," replied Mowat.

There was no good in discussing the question any further, Jack thought, and he gave orders to move on, let the Indians do what they might. Nearly three days spent in watching a few Indians was a great waste, and every effort was now made to make up for lost time. In less than half an hour, they were on the breast of the stream again, moving rapidly to the regular dip of the paddles. Their guns lay as usual in handy positions to get at in case of emergency. The weather was getting very hot. The sun had such a long day in which to heat up both air and earth that neither got cool during the short night.

"Which would you rather have, Mowat—winter or summer?" asked Jack musingly.

"Winter," replied Mowat, to Jack's surprise.

"Why so?"

"I don't mind the cold, sir. There are no mosquitoes, and I can eat twice as much in winter."

Such was Mowat's opinion regarding the seasons, and his view is the view of most of the inhabitants of the great north—white, yellow, and red. The clear air and bright landscape appeals to their sense of beauty, and it is, besides, the season of fur, which is then at its best.

"How many miles have we gone since we entered the Little Larch?" asked Jack of his canoe mate.

Mowat looked doubtful.

"Have a guess, anyhow," said Jack.

"Twenty-five," ventured the half-breed.

"I believe you are not far wrong. I intend to take an observation at noon. Hullo! what does Pilo want?"

The *voyageur* had lifted his paddle high in the air as a signal to attract attention. His canoe gradually slowed up till the other caught up to it.

"Dere is de mout of a river running into de Leetle Larch, monsieur," observed Pilo, pointing to the spot where a lazy stream joined the swifter waters of the Little Larch.

"Very well; let us explore it, though it doesn't look like anything particular," and at Jack's command the canoes turned in.

As they drew into the mouth of the new discovery, a full view of one of the loveliest of streams burst upon them. Jack had from his earliest youth been accustomed to pictures of sylvan scenes, and to the reality as well, for no country in the world has been more prodigally treated by nature in this respect than British North America. But the scene now before his eyes exceeded in loveliness and natural beauty anything he had ever seen or thought of.

Unusually large pines for this latitude lined the low banks of the stream, which was from one to two hundred feet in width. Moss, gray and green, clothed the trees in a rich garment that shone in the sunshine like some Oriental dress. Upon the shaded water, the sunlight danced at dazzling intervals, and at first it really seemed as if ten thousand fairies were dancing upon it. The turf at either side, too, was exquisite, looking as if the mother of the fairies dancing upon the water had spread a carpet of green velvet upon the river-banks for their resting-place. The stream was also easily navigable for canoes, and it appeared as if its source lay in a northerly direction, which was the direction of the course of exploration likewise. A consultation was held. But Pilo shook his head. He was against trying experiments, unless there were more decided indications. At this juncture Mowat made a characteristic observation.

"If we go up this way we will throw the Nauscopees off our track."

"Capital!" cried Jack enthusiastically. "Excellent idea. They will never suspect us of going up here; and besides, if they do follow us we can hear and see them. That is a good idea, Mowat, and it decides me as to which route to take.—Forward, men! We shall call this river the 'Bright Idea.' That suits the stream itself, and registers the reason of our going up it."

The canoeists passed through the mouth of the Bright Idea, and proceeded up the avenue of waters. They presently came to a low rapid, over which they were compelled

to portage. Above this a short distance was another rapid, and as they listened they were sure that the sound that fell upon their ears was the murmur of a waterfall. If so, the Bright Idea was more picturesque than profitable. The sight of a lake about ten acres in extent, a mere widening of the stream itself, induced them to go on, otherwise it is probable that they would have turned back. The sound of falling water became clearer and clearer, and sure enough they soon came to a cliff, probably seventy-five feet high, over which the Bright Idea tumbled in foaming beauty into the basin below.

"What does this mean, Mowat? It looks as if we should have to go back."

"Don't you think, sir, it looks as if we were approaching the height of land?" replied Mowat, very pertinently.

"It does indeed. You are right again. Perhaps we may soon strike the source of a river flowing the other way; and if so, our task is an easy one."

The canoes came to a halt near the fall. Mowat and Pilo were sent ahead to explore. They went ashore, one on one side of the river, and the other on the other. Mowat returned in an hour, Pilo not for two.

"Well, what did you see?" inquired Jack Ralston.

"The river," replied Mowat.

"What river?"

"The Little Larch."

"You don't mean to say that that is all you saw?" cried Jack, almost inclined to be indignant.

"Yes, sir, away to the left."

"To the left!" again exclaimed Jack. "How did you know that?"

"It winds down this way and this way," said Mowat, indicating his meaning by an imaginary line drawn in mid-air.

"Is that all you saw?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sir, except a mountain and the larches."

"No Indians?"

"No, sir."

"Ah, that's good. We are well rid of them."

All lighted their pipes and waited for Pilo. In about an hour he came to the shore and called out. Morrison paddled across and took him off.

"Now, Pilo, what did you see?" asked Jack, as soon as the pleasant-faced French-Canadian got well ashore.

"I saw de river," was the reply.

"What! Did you see the Little Larch too?"

"Oui, monsieur."

"What else?"

"Noting."

"No gold?"

"No, sair."

"Hang the country!" cried Jack impatiently. "Very well; let us get round the cliff to-night, and we can go on to-morrow."

On the other side of it was a narrow incline leading gradually up to the top, and up this they carried their canoes and luggage. The evening was very warm, and Jack decided not to have any fire, as it only served to

attract mosquitoes. They barely waited for the end of the day and the beginning of the long twilight before going to bed. It was not worth while to put up any tent or covering. They merely gathered some boughs and made a bed.

They lay down and were soon asleep, with one exception. That exception was Mowat. He stole away from camp as the twilight began to grow dim, and climbing up to the edge of the falls took a long, searching look over to the river beneath. A dipping paddle caught his eye as a pale beam of light flashed against it. Presently a canoe came into view. There was no doubt of it now. It was the Nauscopees. Mowat hurried back to camp and wakened Jack.

"What is it?"

Mowat put his hand upon his lips and beckoned Jack to follow him. They went quietly in Indian file. As they drew near the edge of the fall Mowat dropped on his hands and knees. Jack did likewise. They crawled to the very edge of the cliff and looked down. The canoe was drawn on the shore, but the Nauscopees were nowhere visible in the fading twilight. In a minute or two one of the Indians returned to the shore from the woods, and, taking a cautious look round, drew the canoe up into the woods out of sight.

"What is going to happen next?" whispered Jack.

"They may portage after us."

"Will they see our tracks?"

"Yes," said Mowat in surprise.

"Then we must get back." And without more talk they

returned to the camp. The others were wakened quietly and apprised of what was going on. A whispered consultation was held, and it was decided to post Mowat some little distance from the camp, down the incline, to give warning if the Indians approached.

Meanwhile Jack and the others looked to their weapons. Mowat was away for the space of an hour, when he returned, as directed by Jack.

"I have seen nothing," he said.

Night was closing in and it was getting dark.

"If those Indians mean mischief, I suppose we had all better keep on the watch," suggested Jack.

"Yes, sir. It will tell on us for to-morrow, but it is the safest way," replied the half-breed.

Accordingly the four voyagers crawled silently to four different stations. A code of signals had been agreed upon. The first to hear an Indian approaching was to give a low whistle. It might warn the Indian, but it would also warn the whites. A deep silence settled down upon the forest. A stray bit of breeze now and then caused a slight rustling, but nothing more. It continued this way till the slow-coming gray twilight of the dawn. The weary sentinels could see each other again.

"What does it mean?" asked Jack, walking quietly over to where Mowat stood like a statue.

"I don't know, sir, but perhaps I had better go and see."

"Yes; go and see," said Jack, anxious to have the mystery cleared up. Mowat glided off, and the others

remained quiet till his return. Presently he came back, walking quite unconcernedly.

"They have moved off in that direction, sir," said Mowat, pointing to the left, almost at right angles to the course of the explorers.

"Do you think they are gone for good? I should like to think they had," said Jack. "Now that they have spoiled our rest it is not reasonable for us to miss our breakfast too. Come along, Pilo; let us have a little fire."

Pilo gathered some dry twigs which were not likely to make much smoke, and made the coffee. Biscuits, fish, and jerked meat completed the meal, and then they all lay down to sleep. When they awoke it was broad daylight, and they hastened to launch the canoes at a safe distance from the fall and begin their journey once more. The rise in the land gradually increased till the little stream became no longer navigable, except in short reaches. It was then that the discoveries of Mowat and Pilo of the preceding night became of service. Shouldering their canoes, they struck off through the woods and came again upon what they supposed was the Little Larch. Launching their little craft once more upon the broad surface of the river, they pushed their way steadily against the current. The river was very winding, but Jack was delighted to find that it led round towards the point where they supposed the height of land to be. Their next care was to be on the lookout for some high point whence they might be able to discern a stream pointing north from the water-shed. As their course was changing, and had now become

practically south to south-west, instead of north, Jack ordered a halt for exploration. A very pretty spot soon presented itself, whereupon they landed and made preparations to camp. As before, Mowat and Pilo were sent out to investigate. As dusk drew near, the mosquitoes appeared in immense numbers. So serious was their attack that Jack got some twigs and a few green branches together and made a smudge. It was a great relief, and although the smoke was by no means agreeable, it was delightful in comparison with the stings of the little insect pests.

"What's this country ever going to be good for, Morrison?" inquired Jack of the Orkneyman, as they lay lazily in the shelter of the cloud of smoke.

"Icebergs and mosquitoes," suggested the latter.

"True," said Jack, laughing; "but the trouble is they don't come together, or we might get some good out of them. It's as hot here as in Montreal. I'll bet it's ninety or more in the shade now."

"Yes, sir, I think it is, and the moskitties is making it hotter for us than the orb of day."

"I must have a good sleep to-night, Morrison. There's no good in trying to work without some sleep. It's worse than having no grub."

"I hope ye do, sir; I don't grudge it ye."

Mowat and Pilo returned together. They had come to a stream not a mile distant, which flowed away to the north again. The work of portaging was begun at once. About fifty yards from the camp, Jack knocked over several partridges. The country was very picturesque,

and the green woods, with creepers and moss and in places turf green and thick as a carpet, with a multitude of small streams threading it sparkling in the sunlight, furnished such a picture as one reads about and can see only in the remoter places of Canada.

Early next morning the canoes were launched, and the voyagers pushed their way. Jack could not restrain his desire to sing, and burst forth in one of his old college songs in which rhyme and reason played a very small part. He reached the end of his tether very soon, and then invited Pilo to sing. There was quite a difference in their voices. Jack's was strong and clear but not musical, whilst Pilo's was soft and very sweet. He sang "*Pendant la nuit*," and "*En roulant*," while the canoes sped smoothly on in the shade and sunlight over the rippling surface of a river that had never before had upon its breast a white man. Such a glorious morning they had not spent in many a day. It is such enchanting scenes as these that make these regions, otherwise wild and lonely, so magnetically attractive to those white men who have the courage to live in them.

Promptly at high noon the signal was given, and the canoes once again sought the shore, that the canoeists might not overtax themselves so early in what promised to be a long day's work. The partridges were kept for the evening meal, as was also a fine trout that had been hooked by Mowat not long after setting out in the morning. The meal over, they stretched themselves out upon the grass for a short rest, their arms akimbo and

their heads resting upon them, face downward. They were soon asleep.

Like the shadows of evening seven dark forms emerged from their hiding-places in the surrounding woods and advanced into the camping-place. No sound was audible save the heavy breathing of the sleepers. The Nauscopees crept up to them, and at a signal seized them quickly and firmly by the wrists, wrenching their arms over their backs, and holding them quietly while they tied their wrists with thongs. An attempt to struggle was made by Jack, but it was useless. Accustomed to discipline in all situations, the men looked to him for instructions.

"What does this mean?" cried Jack, his face hard against the ground.

There was no answer.

He repeated his question in even more indignant tones, but the Nauscopees merely gave a grunt or two and laughed. Having finished their work, the Indians seized what remained of the late meal, and eagerly devoured it. Jack and his men regarded them with more perplexity than pleasure. The Indians prowled round looking for more food, and finding the partridges, roasted them over the fire and ate them. Their faces were besmeared with blood, and presented a disgusting sight. Their next move was to search for tobacco, which, to their great delight, they found in plenty; but they disdained to appropriate the pipes of strangers, and contented themselves with their own, sending up volumes of smoke and emitting repeated grunts of satisfaction. Jack's most immediate dread was that they would

find his small supply of whisky, laid by in case of sickness, but sufficient in quantity to make them fiends incarnate. He communicated his fears to Mowat, but one of the Indians, seeing him conversing, walked up to him and gave him a frightful blow on the side of the head, which had the effect of half-stupefying him for some time. The captors next turned their attention to the canoes, pitching their contents out upon the shore. The blankets, tents, guns, knives, and fishing-tackle delighted them. One Indian broke off one of the bait-spoons, which he tied round his neck with a thong, regarding himself with great satisfaction.

Being afraid evidently that some of the captured party might know their language or enough of it to understand what was being said, the Nauscopees restricted their remarks to comments upon the things that came into their hands. At last one gave a wild shout of triumph. He had found the whisky. Before he was able to sample it, the others rushed at him, and as desperate a fight ensued as well could be without severe injury being done, which indeed would have been the result if the liquor had not been divided with some regard to fairness.

Jack and his party watched the effect with apprehension. The first sign of exultation was a series of yells running all the way from the cry of the horned owl to the frenzy of the war-whoop. The only hope of escape for the prisoners lay in a display of courage and nerve. One of the Nauscopees whipped out a knife and ran at Morris, who was standing up; but the latter neither winced nor blanched, although the malicious exultation of the Indian

was carried nearly to the point of stabbing him. Failing with the Orkneyman, the Indian next tried to frighten Jack, who drew himself up with all the dignity of position and eyed the savage haughtily.

The savages continued to whoop and dance at intervals for an hour or two; the influence of the whisky finally wearing off as quickly as it had taken effect. When satisfied that there was no more to be had, they placed the exploration party in canoes, and set about beginning their journey to the south.

Jack had contrived to speak a few words to Mowat, who alone understood the Nauscopee language, and instructed him, in case of necessity, to hold out hopes of a ransom. The Nauscopee chief, to whose canoe Jack had been apporportioned, intimated his desire to speak, and Jack called to Mowat, who informed the Indian that he alone understood Nauscopee.

"What does he say, Mowat?" inquired Jack, when the Indian had finished.

"He says we have made war upon the spirits of the dead, and that the Great Spirit is displeased with us, and wishes us to go back beyond the Larch with him."

"Is that all?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sir; that is all."

"Well, then, ask him why he took our provisions and arms."

Mowat put the inquiry, to which the Indian, without betraying the slightest surprise, coolly replied,—

"The Great Spirit would not have his white children

shoot in the Indians' hunting-ground, and He has told us to keep the guns till we reach the river."

"Why does he keep us bound, then, in this way?" again asked Jack.

"He only makes us half-prisoners, he says," continued Mowat.

"Why any at all? Does he know where we come from—that we belong to the Company?"

"Yes, he knows that; but he says if we escaped the Great Spirit would be angry with them."

"Is there no way out of this predicament?" asked Jack.

"I think not, sir. I don't believe all he says. I think he has some scheme afoot," Mowat replied.

"Well, then, tell him we give our words that we will return to the fort; and ask him to take off these thongs."

The savage smiled, but shook his head. At this point they went ashore. The Indian then directed the white man's spokesman to tell the white chief—as he denominated Jack—to follow an Indian who stood waiting at the edge of the wood. This Jack and his party did, whilst the Indians brought up the rear with the canoes and equipment. They marched this way in single file for some time, till the gleam of sunlight upon the water could be seen through the trees. What was the surprise of Jack and his party to find themselves upon the shore of a lake of considerable size! The canoes were launched again, and the prisoners were divided amongst the Indians as before. After paddling for upwards of two

hours, the Indians and their unwilling companions reached a landing-place, where the main body of Nauscopees awaited them. Amongst these was the head-man of the tribe, a fine but crafty-looking individual, whom Jack remembered having seen before. Jack's party were now allowed to talk freely; but beyond the consolation of conversation the privilege was of little use, since the ultimate and real intentions of their captors had not been revealed to them. Coffee was now brewed, a beverage of which the Indians are just as fond as their white friends. It was not as well made as Pilo or Mowat would have made it, but it did very well under the circumstances. All enjoyed a smoke, and out of the natural irritation arising from the failure of the expedition a certain degree of comfort was extracted through the medium of the pipe. When the time came for sleep, however, the explorers were all bound hand and foot, and in this way passed the night. Like all Indians, the Nauscopees kept no watch; and though the thoughts of more than one member of the captured party wandered in fancy back to the fort, the idle dream was soon over, for the Indians were on their way again at early dawn. In addition to the trials of capture, Jack's party suffered greatly from mosquitoes; and their bound wrists rendered their efforts to ward them off ineffectual.

Though extremely curious to know the intentions of the savages, all curiosity was repressed, as inconsistent with the standing and courage of the Company's employees. But as the canoes drew nearer to the southern

limit of the happy hunting-grounds—namely, the Larch River proper—the wily chief began to throw out hints of presents required by the outraged spirits.

“Tell him I’m sorry about the spirits, Mowat, but that if they will come to the fort we’ll undertake to soothe their wounded feelings.”

But Mowat wisely refrained from offering insult to the spiritual friends of the benighted savage, and awaited further and more sage advice. At last Jack could stand the restraint no longer.

“Ask the copper-coloured rascal what he wants, anyhow,” said he.

Mowat did as bidden.

“He wants guns and powder, and red cloth for the women,” said Mowat.

“Very well. Tell him we’ll send him some back when we get to the fort; or, if he likes it better, he may come along with us.”

But the Indian, knowing that if he did go to the fort he would be a marked man in future, resolved to stay in the wilderness until such time as the gifts were sent, when, a season having elapsed, the whole affair might be forgotten.

“Find out if he means all of us to go to the post, or if he intends to keep some of us as hostages,” said Jack.

Again Mowat directed himself to the diplomatic task of finding out the Indians’ wishes without a compromise of white dignity.

It was too true. Jack was to be kept as a hostage,

and the goods were to be delivered at a certain spot ; when, if all was well, he would be liberated ; but if not, then the spirits would require satisfaction.

Before they reached the highway to the fort, along which it was quite possible that some boats from that quarter might be cruising, the stipulations were gone over in detail. There were to be four guns—one for each of the offending party—and ammunition, blankets, and ornaments, including cloth. A feast of parting was held, and a pipe smoked ; whereupon Mowat in one canoe, and Pilo and Morrison in the other, set out for the post.

Chapter XVI.

SAMBO'S DREAM.

THE chief subject of conversation at the post during the absence of four of the most important members of the staff was naturally their wanderings in search of the great lone land beyond the Larch River. Jack Ralston was a great favourite with Sambo, who needed very little encouragement to talk of him.

"And is he gone to de Pole, Mith Linda?" inquired the dusky cook and man-of-all-work.

"Not quite, Sambo," said Linda, laughing.

"I hope he ain't a-gwine to get drownded and have somethin' happen to him. I hate them tings happenin' all de time."

"What things?" asked Linda.

"He may die, or be drownded, or starve to death; for dat Morrison ain't no good at cookin', and Mowat he kin only fry taties and make rabbit stew."

"I should think, Sambo, that fried potatoes and rabbit stew were not so very bad."

"No, dey ain't bad, Mith Linda, when dey's cooked

right; but I know de way dey cook. It ain't no cookin' at all. It's just holdin' things before de fire."

"Quite true. I know their cookery cannot be compared to yours; but then it's a good deal better than starving."

Sambo grinned a big grin at this testimonial to his culinary prowess, and shifted from one foot to the other. Suddenly he began again, with eyes wide open, the whites gleaming like balls of snow, and his hand sawing up and down in the air.

"Do you know, Mith Linda, I dreamed an awful dream, or whatever you call it, last night."

He paused for an invitation to continue.

"Well, Sambo, what was it? Not like your dream of the ghost, was it?"

"Now, Mith Linda," remonstrated Sambo, "it wan't like dat at all. I saw Massa Ralston a-stan'in' up in de boat a-wavin' his arms about and callin' Mowat. 'Mowat! Mowat!' says he. 'Come here quick. The Injuns is killin' me.'"

Linda laughed heartily at the earnestness and imagination of the darky.

"I saw dem Injuns jus' as plain as I'm seein' you, Mith Linda, and I called out. I says, 'Hol' on dar, Massa Ralston, hol' on dar. Sambo is comin';' and jus' den I fell out o' bed and didn't see what's became of him. Ain't dat awful, Mith Linda?"

"It is awful, Sambo, if your dream is a true one," said Linda.

Again there was a pause, during which Sambo gathered up new material for conversation.

"Now, Mith Linda, what do you think Pilo was doin'? Why didn't he go and help Massa Ralston?"

"Your dream should have told you that."

"Yeth, Mith Linda, but it didn't; and how d'ye explain dat?"

"I can't explain it. It's no good asking me," said Linda, shaking her head dubiously.

"Well, what was Mowat and dat Orkneyman and dem trash doin', to leave Massa Ralston in de boat fightin' de Injuns?"

"But you must remember, Sambo, that this is only a dream of yours. If you hadn't fallen out of bed, as you say, you might have found it all out."

But Sambo couldn't understand it that way, and went away mumbling the same thing over and over again, to the effect that it was a disgrace and a shame that "Massa Ralston" should have been so-left.

"Sambo has just been here, mamma," said Linda, as her mother entered the room, "and has unburdened his mind of one of his dreadful dreams. He says that Jack was left fighting Indians single-handed, but that he fell out of bed before the finish of it, and is unable to say how it came out."

"I hope he has not dreamed aright," said Mrs. Paterson, smiling.

"No, I'm sure he hasn't, because he never does dream truly; and I don't believe in dreams anyhow," said Linda.

"I'm not so sure of that, my dear. You remember when your father cut that fearful gash in his head, the old Eskimo woman foretold it."

"So she did!" exclaimed Linda, trying to suppress a feeling of alarm which would have delighted Jack's heart had he known of it.

"Here's your father," continued Mrs. Paterson. "We'll see what he says about it."

The case of the dream was stated to Mr. Paterson, with due regard to all the details and particulars; but he was sceptical, being by no means convinced of the accuracy of dreams at any time, and especially of the sort given interpretation of by Sambo, whom he considered of all human beings the most superstitious and absurd.

"It is too ridiculous to talk about, my dears," replied Mr. Paterson, standing by his daughter's chair, and patting her head gently and lovingly.

Poor Sambo! that he should have his vision dismissed in this summary and unfeeling manner. It is true that by birth and education, if he may be said to have had any, he was not an intellectual star of the first magnitude; but what could be expected of one whose father and mother had been born slaves, and that too in a land where freedom was supposed to have been inhaled with every breath? Alas for the consistency of the human race! Principles and practice are too often entirely separate and distinct. However, Sambo's father and mother did find liberty and a free asylum in Canada, whither they brought young Sambo also—"born in captivity," as they say of wild

animals in a menagerie. Oh, the delight and joy of all concerned when they had set foot on Canadian, on British-Canadian soil! But there was one memory of their old home that even the horror of slavery could not wipe out, one too sweet to be forgotten. The songs of the sunny south still lingered in their ears. Often, and with all the plaintive sweetness of the negro voice, did they sing, "Away down south in Dixie" and "Away down upon the Suwannee River," and other melodious reminders of their old home. Yet sweeter to them by far than all these recollections was the thought that no lash, no bloodhound, no slave-market could ever rise up in the land of their adoption to rend and destroy both body and soul. At the same time, their memories of youth, the events of their early days, the dread period of toil and punishment, were the stock of interesting reminiscences upon which Sambo as a youth was fed, and with which he imbibed a tremendous amount of superstition and kindred follies. These yarns of wonders and these improbable tales had developed his imaginative faculty to such an extent that he could not relate an account of the most ordinary everyday occurrences without a garnishment of improbability; and, like most prophets, he learned no lessons from failures, which indeed, as a rule, seem only to whet the appetite for more. On one occasion, in the course of a ramble by the river, he came to a small eddy formed by the current, which whirled about a shelving rock jutting out from the shore at the base of a high part of the bank. Davis, the blacksmith, was a fisherman, and delighted in gratifying his taste on every occasion

when his duties did not require his attendance at the forge. On this occasion he was at the top of this elevated bank or cliff, preparing to cast his fly, when Sambo came along looking for shells and other riverside curiosities. The negro was deeply engrossed in this pursuit when he reached the eddy, at which he stopped. Without making any noise or movement to betray his presence, Davis cast his fly. No sooner did it touch the water than it was seized by a monster perch. As it came to the surface near the shore, it happened to be in the neighbourhood of Sambo; and as it gave a last tremendous leap in frantic and blind efforts to escape, it struck Sambo, who at the instant was bent over looking into the pool, full in the face. With a wild yell and a bound he made off with all haste for the fort. His staring eyes and unusual gait proclaimed from afar to Mr. Paterson, who happened to be standing at the door taking a casual survey of the landscape, that something was wrong.

"What's the matter, Sambo?" said Mr. Paterson to the breathless negro.

"Oh Lord a Massa—sure's you're born—I done got smashed by a devil in de rivah. Sure's you're born, massa, de rivah is full of black and white devils. I seed dem, massa, ebery one; dey struck dis niggah on de mouf."

"They chose a good-sized mark, Sambo, anyhow," was Mr. Paterson's consoling remark; but Sambo was too frightened to remain even within sight of the river, and hastened to his bedroom, where he locked the door and shut the window.

Loud and long was the laughter amongst the men and in the master's house when the truth came out; but Sambo wouldn't believe it, and is positive to this day that a "rivah devil" jumped up and hit him. But despite his absurdity there was a kindness and sympathy about the woolly-headed black man that endeared him, somewhat after the manner of a house-dog, to the people at the post, and many a little act of kindness was done for him by Linda, whom he worshipped with a devotion as profound as ever was felt for noble dame by knightly heart.

It was on Sundays, however, that Sambo took his real stand as a man of importance at the post. During the week he spent his time in preparing food and washing dishes, but on the Sabbath day he sang in the choir, and sang well, having a deep, melodious voice of great power and an admirable ear. To hear him sing the "Nunc Dimittis" on a Sunday evening in summer, when the air was soft and still, was a great treat, and atoned for much of his wild doings during the rest of the week. When Jack was at home he assisted Mr. Paterson in reading the service. The choir consisted of Mrs. Paterson, Linda, and Sambo. The congregation was usually made up of the people at the fort, and any of the Eskimos, Indians, or traders who happened to be at hand, and wished to attend.

It was on one of these quiet Sundays, some time after Jack's departure, when Linda, happening to look out of the window during the morning service, descried two canoes in the distance coming down the river. They looked familiar, as also did the figures in them, but still

she watched them and said nothing. But she was soon convinced that she was not mistaken.

"Papa, I think I see Pilo and two canoes," she said softly.

Her father put down the book, and went to the window. Mrs. Paterson also arose and looked out.

"It certainly looks like them.—Come here, Nawiswick," said Mr. Paterson, speaking to an Eskimo, who could see things clearly at the distance of a mile on land and two on water.

Nawiswick advanced and looked out.

"Who are they?" asked Mr. Paterson.

"Morrison, Pilo, Mowat," replied the Eskimo, repeating the names slowly.

"Is Mr. Ralston not there?" cried Mr. Paterson.

"No, sir; he not dere," said the Eskimo.

"Oh dear! What has happened to him?" exclaimed Mrs. Paterson in alarm.

The service was abruptly ended, and Mrs. Paterson and Linda hurried down with Mr. Paterson to meet the canoes.

"What is it, Mowat? What is it, Pilo—quick? Where is Mr. Ralston? Is he hurt?" asked Linda, who had reached the shore first.

"No, ma'am," said Morrison, who had a louder voice than the others. "He is well, God be thanked, but a prisoner."

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Mr. Paterson, coming up.

"A prisoner!" echoed Mrs. Paterson in astonishment.

"What do you mean?"

"The Indians took us all prisoners, ma'am," said Mowat, "but sent us back for ransom. I would have stayed, and so would any of us, but the Indians sent us off."

"What's this all about? Prisoners? Of my officer? We shall see to this!" exclaimed Mr. Paterson, whose alarm had given place to indignation.

The canoes touched the shore, and the occupants sprang out. It is unnecessary for us to repeat the conversation that took place between the men and Mr. Paterson, the circumstances of which have already been related. Suffice it to say that the ransom was prepared, although Mr. Paterson was much more inclined at first to send a detachment of his men and some Eskimos to demand Jack's immediate release. The danger of this, under the circumstances, however, was apparent, and he resolved to comply with the demand, and seek satisfaction some other time. The two canoes were put away, and a larger one made use of. Into this the guns, ammunition, and sundry stuffs were placed; and as no more than three were to return to the rendezvous, the same three set out.

Chapter XVII.

THE CAPTIVE SET FREE.

JACK saw the departure of his men for the post with feelings of disappointment and anger. His cherished scheme of exploration had received a severe if not a final check in the misfortune of this stoppage by the Indians. He lay down in the shade of a small group of trees, and lighted his pipe, composing his mind for reflection. He could see some of the Indians at their occupation of mending their birch-barks, whilst others lay down, as he had done, to smoke and take it easy. Though he was allowed a much greater degree of liberty than before the departure of his men, he could see that he was closely watched in case he made any attempt to escape. Fortunately his appetite, by reason of enforced idleness, was not good, hence he could refuse without effort the broth made by the Nauscopees, consisting of all and any kind of food that came handy. Contenting himself with a piece of partridge, roasted by himself on a stick before the fire, for breakfast, and a little fish for dinner, flavoured with salt taken from his own supplies, which had not been interfered with, since the Indians never eat salt, or whatever

else was at hand, he found the time slip quickly by. At night the flies and other insects were insupportable—so much so that he was compelled to get up and sit in the smoke of the camp fire, which was not less unpleasant though more tolerable than the stings of the mosquitoes and the bites of the flies. There were a few rather fine, athletic-looking Indians in the little band, one especially being a man of lithe and powerful frame. He was stretched in deep repose not far from the fire, and Jack thought he had seldom seen a more picturesque and striking figure. What must these denizens of the wilderness have been in their heyday, before the white man, under Cartier and Champlain, had invaded the northern half of this continent, to fan into a conflagration, wide in its range and destructiveness, the fitful flame of Indian savagery and lust of war! A stranger condition did not exist in the wide world, nor has one existed from the earliest records of mankind, than the condition of the aborigines in North America. From the fierce, heroic, and cunning Seminole of the south to the Iroquois of the north—those Romans of the new world—and to the more savage and less chivalrous Dacotahs of the west, there has never been upon the surface of the earth a more extraordinary race of people. Their highest aim was to shine in war, and their virtues were those of the warrior, whilst the possession of a high degree of good faith and a disdain of meanness cannot by any means be denied them. Records, and they are many and reliable, show them to have possessed qualities of both the Greek and Roman, and

to have far excelled any of the native tribes of Europe, Asia, or Africa.

The Nauscopees and the Muskegons of the north are the dregs of the Indian race, but few of them are anything more than relics of what was once both interesting and considerable. As the day dawned, they were all astir, awaking, like the rest of nature, at the first peep of the sun. It was evident that there was considerable excitement amongst the Indians concerning the return of the party from the fort with the ransom, and Jack himself took an increasing interest in their return. He allowed them seven days to go and come, and he was greatly surprised to see a large canoe looming into view on the morning of the sixth day. True to their nature, the Indians took the arrival very coolly. The chief began a long harangue about the spirits; but Jack cut him short, telling Mowat to inform him that he hoped to see him at the fort some day. The invitation was accepted, and the gifts having been paid over, Jack jumped into the canoe, and away they sped on their return to the post.

"Do you think, Pilo, that the brute will ever come to the post?" asked Jack, leaning back and looking at Pilo, who was helmsman, with a smile.

"No, monsieur, I do not tink so. De Injun too sharp for dat," and Pilo gave one of his little French laughs.

The return trip was without any incident worthy of note, but Jack's heart began to beat quickly as the post drew near. As soon as the big canoe was espied coming down the river, Mrs. Paterson and Linda went down to the shore.

"Welcome home!" cried Linda, waving her handkerchief enthusiastically. Jack took off his cap with a most polite flourish.

"Are you harmed at all, Jack?" inquired Mrs. Paterson.

"No, Mrs. Paterson—not in the least. They treated me very well, apart from their conduct in stopping us and playing highwaymen. They are a pack of rascals, but then the Indians are all that," replied Jack.

"And tell us what they did, Jack. Did they burn you at the stake, or anything like that?" inquired Linda.

"No, Linda. They simply kept me prisoner till the gifts to the spirits arrived."

"And did they really believe in the spirits?"

"I don't believe they did," said Jack. "It was only a humbug, a trick to get guns and ammunition, and clothes for the squaws. They are very superstitious, and believe, no doubt, as I have always heard, that the unexplored land is the happy hunting-ground, but they are great rascals all the same."

"What would they have done to you if the things hadn't come?" asked Linda, as they walked up to the post.

"That's more than I can tell. They might have turned me adrift, but I do not believe that they would have dared to inflict any bodily injury upon me," said Jack simply.

"It is now the 28th of June, and too late for another start this year," remarked Mr. Paterson, as he and Jack sat discussing the late events and the present situation.

"I had hoped, sir, that you would not think so. I believe that with two men to portage the canoes, and with two to carry the guns and the remainder of the outfit, we could go down to the mouth of the river and start inland from the coast with every prospect of some success. At any rate, I should dearly like to try," said Jack.

There was something in Jack's tone and manner, as well as in his sensible conduct during the late abortive expedition, that determined Mr. Paterson to change his mind, and to send out another expedition without delay.

"I will think over it, Jack—that is, as regards the route—but at any rate you may prepare immediately for another trip," said Mr. Paterson. "Have a glass of wine, and we shall drink to your success."

Some of the fine old Hudson Bay sherry was produced by Mr. Paterson from his own private cupboard, and the best wishes for the renewed adventure were solemnly uttered by both. Jack's delight may be easily imagined.

Chapter XVIII.

A BRUSH WITH THE INDIANS.

IT is astonishing what a transformation is worked in a youth by giving him a position of more or less responsibility. In fact, it is responsibility that draws out what there is in a man. If he be capable of taking a man's part he will then have the opportunity, and if he has any "stuff" or stamina in him it will then appear. Of course, Jack was already a man in years, and it remained for him now to add the dignity of manhood to his years. The former trip was an easy matter compared with what this was to be, and Jack and his men both foresaw it. This feeling weighed upon them somewhat without their knowing it, and as a consequence their departure was made with even less display than before.

They reached the mouth of the river early in the afternoon. The tide was favourable, so they pushed along on their way. Jack shot a brace of geese, on the wing—a feat which, though common enough amongst old hands, was by no means a poor one for a young hunter, especially when the motion of the canoe is taken into account. The solitary pair were going north at a rapid gait, when Jack sighted them flying with that long, low, level

sort of flight characteristic of geese. They came on at a tremendous rate about two hundred yards away; and Jack, taking good aim, shot the gander dead. It fell heavily, turning over and over, while the poor goose made a sudden wheel that brought it round in a short circle. Bang! went the rifle again, and the widow was numbered with the slain. Mowat and Jack paddled over and lifted them into the canoe. They were in good condition, and were an omen of good fortune.

At dusk the voyagers lay down on the shore well out of way of the tide; and the weather being warm and delightful they really had no need of any covering other than the slow-moving clouds that hid the waning moon. The shores were lined with boulders shoved well back by the ice in its spring movement, when, with the force of its expanding and breaking up, and the added movement of the tide, they are carried little by little back to the line of shore. When the tide is out, in summer-time, the beach appears dotted with these stony monsters.

Early the next morning, after partaking of a light meal—because it is better to take several light meals during the day than fewer and heavier ones, at any rate in the course of a long and arduous journey, where one is called upon to be active at all stages—they again set out. The mouth of a river appeared after they had been under way an hour or so; and, in accordance with the plan outlined and determined on by Mr. Paterson, they turned into it to explore as far as possible, and to see if any other waterways, likely to be of service,

lay contiguous to it. Like all rivers flowing into the sea it could not be gauged till tide-mark was reached, but according to appearances it gave promise of being a stream of some magnitude. On either side were high, mountainous hills, the granite cropping out boldly at the tops. The lower half of these eminences was clothed in a thick, stunted undergrowth, which, growing denser in the valleys between, gave a dark and frowning look to the landscape; though, as Mowat remarked, with valleys like those they might hope to fall in with tributary streams. Though unexplored by white men, so far as known, or by natives either, beyond a few miles up, this river was known as the "Little Rocky."

"What is that, Mowat?" asked Jack as they paddled along. The foremost canoe had for the moment disappeared round a bend. Mowat stopped paddling and listened.

"That's a fall," he replied.

As they advanced they saw Pilo and Morrison a little way off waiting for them to come up.

"Hey, Pilo!" said Jack; "what now?"

"A fall, sir," said Pilo, nodding his head in the direction of the sound.

Gradually, as they paddled along together, the sound became more and more distinct; and the water, running in a narrower space, moved more swiftly, eddying in currents around large boulders that began to appear in great number and prominence.

"I am afraid we shall have to make a long portage here. It begins to look dangerous for the canoes," said

Jack; but no opening appeared on either side as a likely place for landing, while the rapid current and loud roar told plainly that they were within a short distance of the fall.

"I dink dey should call dis de Big Rocky, not de leetle one," said Pilo, smiling in his usual merry way.

"Quite true," said Jack, "and I think the sooner we land the better it will be for the canoes. I was led to believe that the Little Rocky was a comparatively quiet stream. So it may be later on, but it certainly is not at this season. Pilo, keep your eye out for a safe place to land, on the right bank, if possible."

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded Pilo, but the sound of his voice was almost drowned in the tumultuous rush of the waters. A quiet spot on the lower side of a point that jutted out into the stream looked inviting and safe, and thither the canoes were headed. As they shot into the little bay the current caught their sterns and swung them sharply round, but by skilful management they were kept off the rocks, and in a moment more their occupants were ashore, and the canoes drawn up out of harm's way.

The view before the travellers was not reassuring. The surface of the uneven ground was dotted thickly with large boulders for some distance back from the river, and amongst them patches of fir and stunted pine with an odd larch grew so thickly that there could not really be said to be any opening at all, at any rate for pedestrians.

Pilo and Mowat were sent forward to find out a route round the falls, if there was one. If not, they were to go

across to the other side and see what could be done there. As there was nothing to do but wait, on the part of those left behind, Jack and Morrison sat down and took it easy. In the ordinary business hours of everyday life it would be considered as wholly out of place for an employee, or, indeed, for an employer, to smoke; but in the backwoods of Canada the pipe is allowable at all times, just as much as a glass of water would be in civilized life. We may expect, therefore, to find that Jack and the Orkneyman solaced their waiting moments by smoking, as indeed they did. Jack lay upon the grass, which, in patches, was quite thick and soft; whilst the Orkneyman, possibly with some little feeling of deference towards his superior officer, sat bolt upright, his back planted firmly against a huge rock.

"I hope we're not to meet with obstacles like this very often, or else our progress will be slow," grumbled Jack, half inclined to resent the early obstruction to his advance, and also to test the feeling of so experienced a man of the world as Morrison.

"It's not likely that this sort of thing is going to keep up; but then one never can tell what is going to turn up in a country like this. At the same time, it eesn't an easy way that makes a man," replied the latter.

"No; that's true," said Jack. "If we never meet obstacles we never know what we are made of. A chap may go on through life thinking himself able to do almost anything; but they are not many who do not find out sooner or later what it is to meet with misfortune. Then comes the test. If a man can resolutely set himself to

work to go round the falls of life when he cannot go over them, to portage where there is no paddling, to meet every foe with a resolute mind, determined that he will never turn cur, but die game if need be. he will be sure to get on, or, anyhow, he will be sure to have the respect of every man whose respect is worth having. It is wonderful, though, how many there are who stop and rest content with building castles in the air, and fancy themselves big fellows when they are as yet only looking up at the mountain which they are thinking of climbing. What is your idea of the chief requisite for success, Morrison?"

The Orkneyman, thus appealed to, took his pipe out of his mouth and said, "Doing, and doing well, what lies at our hand."

"Good!" exclaimed Jack; "that applies to what we have before us now."

"Indeed it does," said Morrison, with a good-natured grin.

"I am continually in dread of failure. It bothers me a good deal, I must confess," said Jack, half soliloquizing.

"Well, if you fail, we all fail," cried Morrison in astonishment.

"True again, Morrison. What a blessing it is to have a wise head like yours! Mr. Paterson knows well that if you and Mowat and Pilo say anything can't be done, it can't be done—that's all."

"Well, if we can't do it, who is going to do it?"

"More philosophy," cried Jack, laughing.

"Since I was a wee boy, the first time I came to Canada,

I just made up my mind to do my best, and leave the rest to the Lord. It's a gran' thing to be able to say that. Livin' in this world isn't much without a hope for the future."

Jack was very much interested.

"Do you always say your prayers?" he inquired.

"I do. There's never a night, blow hot or blow cold, that I don't get down on my knees and pray for the forgiveness of my sins," replied Morrison.

"I was taught to do that too, but somehow I have got out of it lately. There's so much to do, and my mind seems to wander away from it so much, that I forget all about it. These solitudes make a fellow feel more like praying than the cities, or even the fort. Just listen to that fall. How wonderful it is! When one thinks of all that God has made, and how wonderfully it has been done, it seems like a piece of impertinence to forget acknowledging our indebtedness to Him, or our dependence upon Him."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Mr. Ralston. It gives me great pleasure to hear a young man speak like that. When you come to die, you will thank God that you were never allowed to forget Him. It is a mean thing, as you say, sir, to forget the great Maker of the universe. We poor, crawling things, what are we? We may die or be killed at any time, and then what can we say when we appear before the judgment-seat? It won't sound well to say that we forgot about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross in order to save us. If

we forget Him, how can we expect Him to remember us?"

"True, Morrison, quite true. I shall begin this very night and say my prayers. I am glad you spoke so plainly about it. It is well for young men to be reminded of their duty occasionally."

"Well, Pilo," said Jack, looking up at the returning *voyageur*, "how is the portage? Bad, eh?"

"Yes, monsieur, it is de worse portage I saw ever in all my life. Dere is big stones one against de other. De bush is ver' difficult. Mowat will be back in few minutes."

"Very well, then; come with me and we'll cross the river and see what we can do on the other side," said Jack.

Pilo followed him to the canoe, and they jumped in, and bore away for the other shore. Having landed and drawn up the canoe, they proceeded to explore. It was extremely tedious and exhausting, but it was quite evident that the lie of the country, both near the shore and farther inland, was such as to preclude the possibility of doing any portaging on that side of the river either.

On returning, a council of war was held, and it was at once decided to strike a little farther in, and to resume the journey without delay. Accordingly, the canoes and luggage were shouldered, and the guns trailed. To their intense surprise, the explorers found a comparatively easy path after carrying for about half an hour, and it raised the spirits of the entire party when they were enabled to strike off across country at a fair pace. Some beautiful

bits of scenery, quite in keeping with the picturesqueness of the waterfall, relieved the monotony of stones and scrubby bush.

They struck a stream again early in the day, and putting the canoes in, dipped their paddles and swung away at a round pace. By night, they had gone thirty miles farther into the heart of the unexplored region; and beyond the distance already accomplished no one was supposed to have gone as yet, though what the Indians or Eskimos might have done at different times in their history it would be difficult to say. Except wild tales of spirits and extraordinary animals, nothing tangible had been reserved in the way of a history of the region.

The wilderness became more and more desolate in appearance as they advanced. The difficulties of the journey increased. In places the river ran between cliff-like walls, the current being swift and dangerous, but the skill of Pilo and Mowat kept the canoes out of serious trouble.

The sameness of the scene was varied one morning by the appearance of a huge black bear, who stood on the top of one of the lower hills and "surveyed the landscape o'er." Morrison, being in the bow of the forward canoe, discovered him first, and spoke low across the water to Jack, who put a cartridge in his rifle and aimed carefully. He fired as Mowat swung the canoe round, and Bruin fell. Now came the questions: How was the bear to be got? and when got, what was to be done with him? Both were so difficult of solution that it was finally decided to leave

him where he fell. To kill wantonly and without reason is the work of a butcher, but not of men with the instinct of what is known amongst sporting men as true sport. Yet we may acquit our party of any such trespass in this case, for it did not occur to them that it would be impossible to reach the shaggy monster of the wilderness, till he was no more.

When they drew up that night they heard the wolves again—something they had not heard for weeks. Jack had brought one small trap with him, and he put this out. He was rewarded with a catch in the morning of as ragged and savage-looking a denizen of the waste as ever was pictured to the imagination or suggested by a nightmare.

Towards noon of a very beautiful summer day they came to a broad and low-lying part of the country, which suggested a great glacial movement at some long-gone period.

It was deemed advisable to begin here the work of exploration. Accordingly the canoes were again beached, and the voyagers separated, each taking a different direction. In addition to his little pocket compass and gun, each one took a snack with him, in case of not wishing to reach camp again before night. The reappearance of semi-tropical birds gave quite a look of homeliness to the country; and Jack felt as if, after all, Montreal must be just a few miles away over the hills to the south, and that, if necessary, he could walk home in the cool of the evening. Little streams, such as he was accustomed to at

home, rivulets and brooks, stole through cool, shady beaver-meadows, flanked here and there by firs sheathed in northern moss, at this season green and lovely. Dark vistas of seemingly unfathomable depth gave the searching eye a sweet resting-place, and suggested to the mind reflections, sometimes of a pleasurable and sometimes of a sad nature. There was not a sign of anything human ever having disturbed the sacred solitude of the wilderness before. Wherever he moved, the character of this part of the country seemed the same—turf, trees, and streams all fresh and beautiful, if perhaps a little suggestive, on the part of the trees, of a short summer. Though the summer days are long and hot in this arctic region, it is rare that the nights are not cool enough for a slight frost, especially a little in from the sea.

Jack was the first to return to camp, and finding that the others had not yet come in, he sat down to write up his diary. He was hungry, but determined to await the return of the others. Supping together was ever so much nicer than going "single fare," as Morrison used to call eating alone.

Mowat was the first of the others to arrive. Though he had nothing new to report of the country beyond what Jack himself had seen, he brought in very valuable information respecting the lie of the land, and how far they ought to continue in a south-westerly direction before turning more across country. The half-breed had covered a large extent of surface, being a swift walker and an expert woodsman. Pilo, of course, was expected to add to the

stock of information ; but Morrison was slow, and could not be expected to do much in one day. It was getting late, and still no signs of either. Presently Morrison came into camp tired and limping.

"Where's Pilo ? Morrison, have you seen him ?"

"No, Mr. Ralston. We parted this morning, and I have not seen him since. I slipped once or twice on moss-covered logs, or I should have been in before this."

"What do you think, Mowat ?" said Jack. "Hadn't we better take a stroll, and see if anything has happened to him ?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mowat, "if it wasn't for Pilo's knowing more about scouting than any of us. He has his rifle; and even if he did stay out all night, I don't think he would come to any harm."

"True, Mowat," said Jack. "Still, I think it would only be right, in case anything did happen, to look about a little."

"Very well, sir."

"You and I will go, Mowat. I don't think Morrison is quite able to do much to-night. We had better go in opposite directions, hadn't we ?"

"If you don't mind my saying so, sir, there's a better way than that."

"What is it ?" asked Jack.

"To sweep round like the spokes of a wheel, only going opposite ways from the starting-point."

"I don't quite understand you, Mowat."

"Well, sir, if you go out in a straight line and come

back in nearly the same way, you don't cover much ground, for you must come back in a straight line to camp from some place or point; but if you sweep round one way and I sweep round the other, we walk back to camp after we have covered a large piece of country, and then we know the lost man is outside of it."

"Capital idea, Mowat! Is that your own plan?"

"No, sir. We woodmen usually do that way; and if there are three of us, we can explore a large tract of country in a very short time, and you always know just where you are."

"How many paces out shall we go?"

"If you'll go fifty, I'll go a hundred, sir; and we can sweep clear round before it gets too late."

Without further delay Jack and Mowat set out, one going one way, and the other the opposite. In half an hour Jack had returned, but he had met with no sign of the *voyageur*. He awaited the half-breed's return anxiously. In a little over an hour Mowat came back too; but neither had he seen Pilo, nor was there any response to the vocal signals sent up by him which he and Pilo often employed on their expeditions together. There was nothing now for it but to wait till morning; when, to the great relief of Jack, Pilo stalked in as if nothing had happened.

"Hullo, Pilo!" cried Jack, as he caught sight of the French-Canadian; "what, in the name of goodness, kept you out so late? We were greatly alarmed about you."

"I was in de bush. I wandered seven or eight mile

away, and I got tired and lay down under a log. I rose before de lark, monsieur, to reach de camp in time to start."

"You are here in time to start, certainly, Pilo; for we haven't had breakfast yet," remarked Jack, highly amused at Pilo's *sang froid*.

Breakfast over, the party got under way again, and in good spirits after the anxiety and apprehension of the preceding night, which, happily, had turned out to be groundless. By noon they had reached the end of the present river journey; and two days more of successful going, if they chanced to come across another respectable body of water, would find them in the heart of the country and at their journey's end—so far as concerned their instructions to penetrate into the region. It only remained for them then to establish a headquarters, and to spend a week or so in exploring, when the work would be done—so far as was required of so small a party, equipped merely for a preliminary looking-over of the land.

The canoes were again drawn up on land, and another search instituted, which resulted in the discovery that the river which they had been ascending, and which suddenly appeared beset with insurmountable difficulties, in the shape of rocks with currents eddying and bubbling around them, was the outlet of a large though somewhat shallow lake.

The work of portaging the canoes and baggage to the lake-shore finished the day; and Jack and his men were glad to get a good night's rest, with the prospect of a pleasant day's paddle before them.

The lake appeared to be in the middle of a barren and

extremely rough district; and it was no small source of satisfaction that they had been favoured by a waterway into the interior of the country, for if they had ever attempted to cross overland, it was now quite plain that the attempt must have ended in a complete failure. The smallness of the outlet of this lake (which Jack named without ceremony "Lake Linda") was explained by the fact that another and larger river ran out of it to the south, and no doubt connected with the Larch or Little Larch. It would be a bold stroke, and a serviceable one, to complete the circuit of the waters by going down this and returning to the post by the Larch River.

As they intended to camp, a sharp lookout was kept for a suitable place, and also for any ducks or geese that might present themselves.

Lake Linda spread itself out, taking into consideration the numerous bays and inlets, to a variable width of from two to about four miles; whilst in length, if the blue hills in the west were its western terminus, it appeared to reach not less than ten or twelve.

The canoe to the left, containing Pilo and Morrison, fell in with a large flock of ducks. Morrison succeeded in bagging a number with his short-barrelled breech-loading shot-gun; but the rest swerved, and escaped the reception that Jack had prepared for them. However, he made up for this piece of bad luck by soon after hooking an enormous muskellunge. It required all the skill and strength of Mowat and himself together to get safely to shore and land the big fellow.

Keeping close watch along the shore, they succeeded in finding a most favourable place for camping. It commanded a good view of the lake, and was well sheltered from the sun and the north-east wind, which on rainy days makes the weather very unpleasant. A good supply of wood lay at hand. The approaches to the little harbour were excellent, which is something a canoeist knows how to appreciate, as it is so very easy to smash a canoe upon a hidden rock or snag, especially when the wind is blowing half a gale, and the running sea renders it difficult to bring up with anything like steadiness.

While the men were putting up the two canvas tents for sleeping in, and setting things to rights, or, in other words, clearing away obstructions, and putting the place into shape for settling down in, Jack took a promenade about the neighbourhood "to see what he could see." He stepped over a little stream that trickled in a twinkling, good-humoured sort of way into the lake near the camping-ground, and ascended a ridge that extended from some distance inland to the lake shore. In prospecting here with his little hammer, he noticed that the ground gave out a dull, hollow sound. He continued tapping, and found that the sound grew duller and deeper going west, whilst it grew sharper in the opposite direction. This investigation led him to the end of the ridge near the lake; and here, beside a large bush, he found the mouth of a cave. But he wisely refrained from attempting to explore it alone, lest he should meet with some unforeseen obstacle, such as a bear and cubs—things very likely to

be met with in these out-of-the-way but none the less suitable lairs.

As the twilight drew near, a fine fire lighted up the lake, and made everything in the vicinity of the camp look gay and cheerful. "The light of a fire is no worse than the sound of a gun," is a hunter's motto, and to shoot was unavoidable. The cry of a loon echoed across the waters; and although it is sometimes an unpleasant cry—being suggestive of maniacal proclivities—in this instance it was welcome, dispelling, as it were, the dull solitude of this remote and uninhabited region.

"Come, Pilo, give us a story—spin us a yarn," cried Jack, as they sat in the cool evening air at a comfortable distance from the fire. Pilo smiled and looked about him, but seeing that the others were already in expectation of something from him, he drew his pipe from his mouth and began.

"You see, it was in de year '75, when de snow fell ver' deep all ovair Quebec. De lumbermen dey say dat dere is too much snow for to go in de woods to cut timber; but M'sieu Robertson he say, 'No; we cut, no matter how much snow or how leetle or plenty ice. De wedder hit doan't matter. We are in de shanty, and we might as well go into de woods as to go home. We see what we can do, anyhow.' Den de foreman, a big Scotsman, she say, 'Pilo, go ovair to de Black Marsh an' see if de ice is strong enough for de horses.' I say, 'Yes, m'sieu,' and go out early in de next mornin' to do what I was told.

"Dere is no road to de Black Marsh, so I just go trou

de wood. Hit is tree mile from de shanty by de shortis way. I come to de marsh and look at de ice, and den I step on it, and den I get one big club and pound de ice, but no break. Says I to myself, 'Dis is what de master want. He want tick ice; and here it is, sure.' And I walk trou de marsh, so could say to M'sieu Robertson dat de ice hole everyding dat he have. Den I turn and come back en retour, when a leetle peep-hole of de musk-rat catch my foot, and I fall trou. Den I say, 'Dis is good enough for de horse; but, Pilo, you must be strong man, hebby man, to break de ice like dis.' First I laugh, den I go to pull myself hout, but no go. My foot caught in someding. Den I try again, and struggle some more; but still no go for de foot. I call, 'Pierre! Pierre!' but no sound at all, jes' as if a blanket over my head. I call again, but no sound except my own voix. I tink dis pretty bad. De foreman he swear like everyding if Pilo no come back to tell him if de ice tick enough for to bear de horses.

"By-and-by de dinner-time come, but no dinner. De day ver' short. Sun stop at four o'clock. No sign of M'sieu Robertson or de horse. I not laugh no more.

"Den I hear de wild-cat. It make my blood run in my veins. Den hit cry like leetle enfant, and scratch someding. Den moon hit begin to shine on de ice, and I tink I see one, two, tree wild-cats and wolves. I call for de last time, 'Pierre! Pierre! M'sieu Robertson!' but I see noting. I frozen stiff in my clothes, and my foot away down in de water.

"Den de wolves dey begin to howl. First I tink hit Pierre; but no—hit de wolves, sure. I took my knife to sell my blood hard. I den make one great effort; but no, excep' my hat fall off. I could not reach hit. De wolves come close, and one look at me. Den he growl and howl. Dey all come den. Dey run round and round, and den dey run faster and faster, and I get dizzy. Why do dey not come and eat me? Why, do you tink? My hair long, and hit blow in de win', and dey tink hit trap for de wolverine. Den dey howl like mille devils, and run round, and snarl dere teet, and go snap, snap. But dey not come to me. Dey afraid. Den I give my hair a lift wit my fingers, and hit blow in de wind, and dey howl like cent mille devils, but no touch me. Den I get ver' tired, and say my prayers, and go to sleep. In de mornin' I wake. No wolves but one. Den de foreman and Pierre dey come and chase him away, and fin' me; and dey say, 'Ho, Pilo, will de ice hole de horse?' and I say, 'Oui, oui; hit hole Pilo all right.' Den, when dey see me all right, dey try to lift me hout, but no go; and Pierre he jump in de hole and lift de foot out of de hole, and give me whisky. Dat is why Pilo wears de hair long."

And so saying the *voyageur* pulled his hair out to the full length.

"Good, Pilo! Well done, Pilo!" cried the listeners. "It isn't every man who is ugly enough to scare away wolves," added Morrison, laughing.

"What is that?" cried Jack, jumping up, his face indicating great agitation and surprise.

"It's Mowat, monsieur," said Pilo.

Mowat was coming in from the shadow of the low bushes, but appeared to walk more rapidly and anxiously than a man who had no especial object in view. He walked straight up to Jack.

"There are Indians, I think, sir, coming up the lake. I am sure I saw the flash of the paddles."

"If that's the case, there's no time to lose," exclaimed Jack. "Keep a lookout, and we'll remove to the cave. It may be empty, and, if so, will serve our purpose."

The other members of the party then set about the task of removing to the cave as expeditiously as possible, without exciting the notice of the Indians, who might fancy that they were approaching unobserved.

In a few minutes the canoes had been stowed away inside the opening, and all the baggage, including even a piece of red cedar, that Jack had picked up a few hours before. Then everybody listened. There was not a sound of living thing. Could the half-breed have been mistaken? Such was the muttered question in the minds of the three men at the entrance to the cave, where they stood waiting for news from Mowat, and well hidden from the light of the fire, which was getting lower and lower each moment.

Then they saw Mowat leave his position behind the bushes, and come rapidly across to rejoin them.

"What are they doing?" asked Jack hurriedly.

"They are landing down yonder and drawing their canoes on shore," replied the half-breed.

"How many of them are there?"

"I don't know—maybe a dozen."

"What do you think they want, Mowat?"

"What we have."

"Anything else?"

"Scalps," added the half-breed.

"Do you think they would have the temerity to kill us?" asked Jack, somewhat surprised.

"Yes, sir; we are a long way from the fort, and, if killed, nobody would be the wiser. Besides, you know, sir, they want to keep us out of this place altogether."

"Well, they shan't," exclaimed Jack angrily. "Prepare, men, to give these fellows a warm reception."

A council of war was held. It was unanimously agreed that it would be a mistake to treat the Indians as enemies, and so risk life, if they were really nothing more than a hunting-party like themselves. At the same time those who know the Indians best are well aware that the ancient traditions of their race, handed down from remotest times, impel them to continually make war, in which their glory and profit both lie. It was generally felt that Mowat knew more about these things than anybody else.

"What do you advise, Mowat?" asked Jack, when it came to the half-breed's turn to give his views.

"Let us go to the cave, and we can see what they do when they find the camp deserted. If they are young warriors they will not hide their intentions, but if full-grown, it may be hard to find out what they mean. It is not wise to trust them too far when we are in the happy hunting-grounds."

"That's my idea, too," said Jack. "Let it be so. We shall defend the cave."

"It would be well to freshen the fire, sir," added Mowat.

"Why?" asked Jack.

"So that we can see them when they come."

"Very well; do just as you think fit. You know more about the proper course to pursue than we do."

Accordingly, Mowat slipped quietly down to the fire, and put on some of the thickest branches. In the meanwhile the others did what they could to hide the mouth of the cave. Mowat returned on all fours, and came to the entrance from the opposite side to that from which the Indians could get a view of the camp. The night was ominously still. Beyond a slight crackling of the fire, the deep silence of solitude hung over the scene. Shortly after midnight Mowat descried moving forms to the west of the camp, evidently reconnoitring. They dodged from bush to bush, and then suddenly disappeared. They were no doubt crawling along through the grass and over the flat rocks, so as not to catch the eye of any member of the camping-party who might be awake. The explorers waited patiently, and presently a form arose near the fire, and then another, and then several others joined them. They spoke to each other in low tones.

"What are they? Nauscopees?" asked Jack.

"No, sir," answered Mowat; "they are Wood Muskegons. They are more treacherous than the Nauscopees."

"Then Heaven help us or them, for we shall not be

taken. Look to your rifles and guns, men. In case of attack, keep the guns for close work. They are searching for us!" exclaimed Jack, as the dusky forms stirred up the fire and examined the immediate vicinity. They seemed to be very much puzzled at finding a fire burning and no sign of anybody about.

When the chief, known by his extra feathers, who had gone into the bushes in search of signs, returned, he called his braves together. The consultation was interrupted by several of the Indians springing up, and examining the shore for traces. They investigated minutely, with the aid of brands from the fire, the whole camping-ground, crawling in some places on their hands and knees. But it was useless; the stony nature of the place baffled them. After a rapid search, lasting probably twenty minutes or half an hour, they reassembled in council, and talked in a low tone, but with great rapidity and animation. They seemed to be coming to the conclusion, from the manner in which they pointed frequently to the lake, that the camping-party had recently departed, for some reason, leaving their camp fire not only burning but replenished, while a few evidently were quite positive that the party had not departed by water, but were in the neighbourhood somewhere.

It certainly was very puzzling, this finding of a deserted fire in full blast late at night, when it ought to be in a burnt-out condition, according to all the usual signs and conditions of life in the woods. The question which the inmates of the cave meanwhile put to themselves was this:

"Since they know that we have been here, as they evidently expected to surprise us, is there any likelihood of their giving up the search?" The answer to this question was plainly in the negative. It was also noticeable that the actions of the Indians were not consistent with pacific professions. They became too eager and curious, as the search proceeded, for people who had no ulterior object. While some of them were still engaged in debating the question of what to do, and whither the campers had disappeared, the others had gone after their canoes, and were now returning with them. The Muskegons divided themselves into two parties, one going down the shore and the others going directly across the lake. It was now a matter of certainty that they intended to search out the strangers if possible. The remaining direction—namely, that to the west, and from which they had come—would no doubt be attended to by daylight. The interest of those within the cave did not abate, as the appearance, number, and stealthy movements of the savages made it evident that the outcome of the impending conflict would be more or less uncertain. The conditions were all such as to afford small prospect of the escape of the little band from a horrible death in a remote and unknown region.

Mowat, whose fertile brain was ever on guard, suddenly exclaimed,—

"We have forgotten the water!"

"God bless me, what a frightful thing! Get some. Lose no time," cried Jack.

"It will be necessary to use the canoes, sir," said Mowat.

"Very well; let it be done instantly."

The door of the cavern, a round stone, was rolled away, and the four men sallied forth by the dying light of the fire to the water's edge with a canoe. They went to the right a little, so that their bodies might not be seen against the fire-light. The frail birch-bark was handled very gently. It was half filled with water, and then lifted by four pairs of hands as carefully as if it had been a wounded man. By dint of great care and the exercise of no little strength, it was passed through the opening, and safely deposited in the cave.

"Is that enough?" Jack asked in a whisper of the half-breed.

"I think so, sir. It will last as long as the provisions," he replied.

"Do you think they will find us?" asked Jack again anxiously.

"They likely will. It is hard to deceive an Indian in the woods; but it is all rock here, and rocks leave no tracks."

With this observation, Mowat quietly slipped out to see how the mouth of their hiding-place looked.

"I think I hear the dip of a paddle," said he as he re-entered.

His quick ear had not deceived him. In a few minutes the Indians who had gone across the lake returned, and, drawing up their canoes, sat down in the shadow of the low bush near the shore. Mowat now impressed upon Jack by signs the absolute necessity of complete silence.

As for Pilo, he was, of course, in no need of such a reminder. The stillness of the little cave was oppressive, and now that the fire had ceased to give light, except at odd and unexpected moments, the explorers resigned themselves to waiting for the return of the Indians who had gone down the lake-shore for further manifestations of what was to come to pass.

It was not till within a half-hour of dawn that they did return, but beyond the slight grating of a canoe upon a submerged stone, and the faint sound of low voices, no revelation of their intentions was discoverable. The short space of time till dawn was passed in silence. When there was sufficient daylight to see by, the savages were astir. They immediately began to re-examine the ground for traces of the fugitives. They crossed and recrossed it like so many hounds upon the scent, and always at fault, although sometimes very near. If there had been any doubt, hitherto, in the minds of Jack's party as to the pacific intentions or otherwise of the visitors, it was dispelled at the sound of a few half-suppressed war-whoops, given vent to by the younger and less guarded. Two or three had gone into the bush at the back of the cave, but, of course, had been unable to make anything out of their search, and returned angry. It was now becoming more and more evident that the savages were beginning to suspect that the white men were not far away. Had they been Nauscopees, the hidden ones might easily have learned of their intentions from moment to moment; but, unfortunately, Mowat was not familiar with

the Muskegon language. Suddenly the cave-dwellers were startled by a knocking overhead, and then by a triumphant yell. The other Indians came running up to see what had been discovered, and in a moment were scouring round to find the opening of the cave, which the hollow sound gave promise of. It was a time of intense suspense to the prisoners. Each grasped his rifle and awaited discovery. At last the opening was found, and the stone partly rolled away. But the Indians drew back on seeing the men and rifle-barrels within. They held a consultation in a low tone, and then one of them stepped round in front of the entrance. He addressed some words to the inmates, but finding that they did not understand, he made signs for them to come out.

"Not by a long chalk," said Jack quietly. "You don't get us out there. If you are such a nice lot of fellows, why don't you all come round in front, like men?"

Seeing that this ruse did not work, the Muskegons again withdrew in consultation; and since there was no longer an object in keeping quiet, the inmates indulged in conversation and in speculation as to the outcome. But their deliberations were destined to be rudely interrupted.

"Mon Dieu, they go burn us out!" exclaimed Pilo, as a bundle of branches and twigs, with the green attached, was flung over the top down before the entrance.

"What shall we do, Mowat?—make a sortie?" inquired Jack hastily.

"It would be better. If we wait till night they will shoot us from hiding-places. They don't know what we

are now, and will wait to see us smoked out. When you are ready I will go first, if you think best," replied the half-breed, in his usual quiet, self-possessed way.

"No," said Jack determinedly; "I shall be the first to lead on my men."

"Why will you run the risk of leaving the party without a leader, if I may be so bold, sir?" asked Morrison.

"I did not think of that. Perhaps it would disappoint Mr. Paterson. Very well then, Mowat; you may go out first, as best versed in Indian ways."

"Yes, sir," said Mowat, smiling, for he relished a brush of battle, though a peaceful-looking man. "Let us burst out together with our magazines, if they are in sight. I will creep out first and look."

Accordingly, he slipped out of the entrance like a prowling cat, and looked warily before him into the bush, and overhead, and then on either side. None was in sight. Creeping out a little farther, he looked over the top of the entrance, and saw five Indians bringing a fresh supply of wood and brush from the forest.

"Come!" he cried, calling into the mouth of the cave.

They all crept out cautiously, obedient to the sign of Mowat's finger, and made ready to fire. It seemed like murder to Jack.

"Fire!" cried Mowat, and four barrels breathed flame.

The Indians dropped, while Jack's party pumped new cartridges into the breeches of their rifles.

"Wait," exclaimed Jack, as he fastened his eye on the prostrate forms.

A bullet whistled past his ear from the opposite direction, and struck the bank, causing splinters of stone to fly. They looked round, but the shooter was not visible.

"Keep your eyes open for that chap, men," said Jack, "and I will watch the others."

They lay flat on the ground, excepting Jack, who stood up, in order to look over the rising ground.

Presently another puff and a half-stifled cry of pain. A ball from the rifle of the Indian on the lake-shore had taken effect in the fleshy part of Jack's forearm. But hardly had the cry escaped him when three rifles sent as many bullets into the hiding-place of the savage. Jack withdrew into the cave to look at his wound, which was bleeding freely.

At the sound of the second firing the Indians in the rear withdrew into the forest, with the exception of one who lay dead at one side. Mowat saw the movement, and called to the others to fire, but they were not yet ready.

"That fellow must be dislodged before dark, mustn't he, Mowat?" asked Jack, peering through the mouth of the cave and holding his wounded arm against his breast as if it were in a sling.

"Yes, sir; but are you wounded bad?"

"No; it doesn't amount to anything. I'll dress it and keep it from fouling."

The place of the Indian's concealment near the lake was, as near as Morrison could judge, in a straight line with the cave mound and the place where the Indians had disappeared in the thickest part of the bush at the back;

therefore whoever would volunteer to dislodge the Indian sentry must keep in this line, in order to avoid those at the back and to secure the shelter of the mound. If he adopted a flank movement instead, and tried to go round to the side of the hiding-place, he would come into range of the Indians in the bush. But this latter plan had the advantage of giving him the support of his comrades, who, in the other case, would be afraid to fire, lest they should hit him. Yet, if the prisoners were to escape by night, the task of dislodging had to be undertaken at once. Then, out of range and under cover of darkness, escape would be easy, as the canoes of the Indians, drawn up somewhere in the bush near the shore, could be easily scuttled before leaving, and the latter would have to content themselves with chance shots and war-whoops.

"Who will undertake the job?" asked Jack.

"I will, sir," answered the half-breed.

"Good, Mowat; and if you succeed I will recommend you to Mr. Paterson. Choose your own plan."

Mowat was already away, and without leaving any instructions as to what was to be done in case of need. He depended, as, indeed, he always did, on his own resources—the best thing at any time for a man to depend upon. He had dropped on all fours, and was crawling rapidly away, keeping his face to the foe, evidently with a view of giving the Indian as little to fire at as possible. The excitement at the mouth of the cave was at fever-heat. The half-breed had got nearly thirty yards away without drawing fire, when suddenly he changed his direction and

sidled considerably to the left. At this juncture the roar of a gun-shot re-echoed amongst the rocks, but the Indian had missed. Mowat instantly sprang to his feet and gained the shelter of a boulder. From this he took aim and fired several shots at the place of hiding. There was no response or sign of movement till the fourth discharge, when the Indian placed himself accidentally in view of the garrison for an instant only; but that instant was long enough for Pilo, who shot him through the head, as it appeared through the bushes.

"He dead, Mowat," shouted Pilo to the half-breed. "He dead."

"I'll come back then," said Mowat, and in a few minutes he had crawled down in line again with the mound and gained the shelter of the cave without interference from the Indians in the bush at the back.

"Well done, Mowat," said Jack heartily; "you did us a good service. We can take it easy for a bit now."

A lookout was posted to prevent a substitute's being placed by the Indians at the lake-shore or in any other place likely to command the mouth of the cave. At the approach of dusk, arrangements were made to destroy the enemy's canoes. Pilo and Morrison were both anxious to undertake the dangerous mission, and would not listen to Mowat's offer to repeat his daring venture. Jack chose Pilo, as more accustomed to the ways of the wilderness; but a promise was given to Morrison that he should have a chance to share in the dangers of the journey the next opportunity that offered, and that, no doubt, would be

soon. With this the Orkneyman was consoled. Jack now set to work in earnest to dress his wound. At the time of the injury he had torn a piece from the shirt-sleeve of the wounded arm and wrapped it about the arm tightly. In his haste he had wound it too tightly, and his arm now began to pain him.

When night had fallen, so that no object could be distinguished at a greater distance than a few yards, the water was emptied out of the birch-bark, and preparations for immediate departure completed. Jack shouldered one canoe and Morrison the other, carrying their rifles in their left hands and a little bag of provisions, it being decided to leave everything else behind, in order that they might not be impeded in their retreat. Mowat and Pilo loaded their rifles with slug cartridge, as more effective in case of attack at short range. It was a trying and anxious moment. A fall, or perhaps a misstep would give notice to the Indians and precipitate a band of yelling fiends upon them. They crept stealthily down to the shore, and put the canoes in the water. Pilo made haste to scuttle the Indians' canoes. Jack and Mowat stood out about ten strokes, while Morrison held his canoe at the shore, waiting for Pilo. A faint sound as of a blunt instrument ripping through canvas was heard.

"There it goes," said Jack, in a low whisper. "That's Pilo. He's found them." They waited anxiously for a repetition of the sound or for the appearance of the other canoe.

"What on earth is keeping him?" exclaimed Jack, in

great irritation at the delay. A sound now reached their ears, but of a different sort.

"It's a fight," said Mowat. "They've discovered him."

"Shall we paddle in?" asked Jack.

"No, sir; not unless he calls. It's only one Indian, likely, and Pilo will let us know if he can't manage him," replied the half-breed.

The scuffle must have ended abruptly, Jack was beginning to think, when an unearthly yell reverberated across the water, and a few minutes after the rushing of a canoe was heard close at hand.

"Where are you?" called Morrison, in a hoarse undertone.

"Here!" said Jack.

"Fly for your lives. The red devils are after us," and then began the retreat in earnest.

Pilo had scuttled one canoe, when he became aware of the presence of an Indian. Though the savages had but one canoe left, it was necessary for the fugitives to run no risk of having their own frail craft injured, and for the first mile or two they paddled at top speed; but, not hearing the Indians in pursuit, they paused to take breath, and then continued at a slow rate.

"We are well out of that, men," remarked Jack.

"Yes, sir," said Mowat; "but we must keep going. They won't give up the pursuit for a hundred miles, and not till we have passed the cataracts. They will try and steal upon us by night."

"Pilo," said Jack, addressing the *voyageur*, "what kept you so long?"

"I could not find de udder canoe. De first one was at de shore—I near fell over dat; but de udder I could not find. I got on my hands and knees to look for it, but I was run against a man, an Injun. I knew it was an Injun, and I ripped him wit my knife."

"But how did you see where to stab in the darkness?"

"I didn't see. I feel. I cut quick like dat, and my knife stuck into him. He yell, and I ran out to Morrison. I could not find de udder canoe. It was loss in de bush."

"Never mind; you did very well. I think it would be a good thing to meet some of those blackguards and give them a good thrashing. What do you think, Mowat?" said Jack.

"I am afraid, sir, they will try and block us in some way if we do not get out before it," answered the half-breed.

"Well, perhaps you are right," asserted Jack. "It's better to be sure than sorry."

The early dawn was not far off now, so they rested on their paddles. Jack took a few winks of much-needed rest, but the others kept wide awake to listen for sounds of possible pursuit. At the first streak of dawn the paddles once more gripped the water and carried the little band of intrepid explorers on their way towards the coast.

Chapter XIX.

BERRY-PICKING ON THE HILLS.

WHILE our friends, Jack Ralston and his merry men, were away on their exploring tour, seeking to add a new region of tribute to the possessions of the Hudson Bay Company, the pleasant hours of the northern summer at Fort Hope were taken advantage of by Mrs. Paterson and Linda for a variety of expeditions into the wilderness surrounding, for two purposes. One purpose was the acquisition of the sweet, pure air of the mountains, which is so conducive to health and strength, and is laid up as a store to be drawn upon in the long days of winter, when the threatening severity of the weather often makes it dangerous for women to venture abroad. We have mentioned that there was another purpose. It was the collecting of berries—cranberries and blackberries chiefly—for preserves for winter consumption. It was as glorious a summer morning, near the beginning of August, as one could wish for when Mr. Paterson invaded the morning-room of his wife and daughter for the purpose of announcing the opening of the berry season.

"Well, my dear," cried Mr. Paterson, as he rapped at the door of his wife's own private quarters and peeped in,

"when you and Linda are ready, the men are ready for the trip to the berrying-ground. Jones tells me that the small fruit is all very good this year."

"We are ready, Charles, whenever you are. I don't think that Linda and I will go this year without you, though. The last expedition was very pleasant, but we were afraid to venture very far afield, and we missed some lovely views. Linda's new camera is very good, and we hope to lay in a stock of beautiful scenes as well as of berries."

"O papa," cried Linda, "you will go with us. Promise me that. It is too tedious being with the men, and the outing will do you good. So please, papa, promise us," and the enthusiastic girl put her arms round her father's neck and kissed him.

Whatever plans or resolutions he had formed for the employment of his hours, for Mr. Paterson was a very busy man indeed, were, on such occasions as these, utterly set at naught by the beseechings of his pretty daughter, who year by year continued to grow in his affection and to entwine more surely round his heart the tendrils of her love.

Accordingly they set out, Mr. Paterson on the right, with his daughter clinging to his arm in a bantering, playful mood, while Mrs. Paterson walked along on the left, endeavouring to collect her thoughts, which every now and then were dissipated by the gay frivolity of Linda. In the rear walked the body-guard, consisting of M'Diarmid, armed with a gun, in case of attack by a stray

wolf or bear. This precaution was quite necessary, in view of more than one surprise, on former occasions, of a dangerous character. Next to him walked the pail and basket carrier, Sambo. The old enmity between these two continued and even increased in intensity as time rolled on.

"O daddy, here is such a pretty place to take your photograph in!" cried Linda, as they came to a bend in the river before turning up the "Big Glen."

"Wait till we get to the Peak," remonstrated or rather pleaded her father.

"Oh, see this view!" she cried, without in the least regarding his suggestion. "It is perfectly lovely. There is a background of the black mountain. That is for you, daddy dear.—Then, mother, sweetest, you shall sit by father and look that way, contemplating the exquisiteness of the landscape, with a look of profound admiration."

"O Linda dear—" began her mother in smiling remonstrance; but it was of no use. Linda was bent upon having a "lovely photograph," as she called it.

"Now, M'Diarmid," continued Linda, giving orders as if she were an artist in London or New York, "will you sit there, please, by that stone, but in such a way that your gun may be seen."

"Here, miss?" And if it had been in the middle of the river, there is no doubt he would have made certain where it was that Linda wanted him to go, and then he would have straightway gone there.

"Yes, M'Diarmid, please. Yes; that's it. You are now quite perfect."

Mr. and Mrs. Paterson could not refrain from smiling at the endeavours of the brawny Scotsman to obey the whimsical requests of their daughter; but his awkward efforts to please were nothing in comparison with the desperate attempts of Sambo to do not only what he was told to do, but more, so desirous was he of pleasing the object of his worship, whom he looked upon with much the same degree of admiration as that of a street boy viewing the royal princesses driving to church.

"Never mind, Sambo," exclaimed Linda impatiently at last. "Just keep your face straight, and that will do."

This task, simple in itself, was yet more than poor Sambo could accomplish, in view of his hilarious frame of mind, the importance of the occasion, and the awe in which he stood of the camera and the process of putting his features on paper. Several times had "Mith Linda" taken his "pictuh," as he called it, and each time, to his extreme astonishment, he turned out more white than black.

"Now, once more, all ready," said Linda, taking the camera and getting it in focus. Click! and it was done.

"Do you think we shall turn out a very pretty picture, Linda?" asked her mother.

"Yes, mother dear; and now we may go on for the berries."

The berries grow, in this northern latitude, not on high bushes, but on plants level with the moss which covers

the rocks. They are smaller, too, than their southern compatriots, but are considered to excel them in flavour, being more pronounced and piquant. High upon the brow of the foothills, or lower part of the mountains proper, the party paused to take in the ever-changing view.

"How glad we ought to be, Charles, that we can enjoy the delightful weather and these exquisite scenes!" exclaimed Mrs. Paterson in admiration.

"Yes, my dear; and others may think themselves more highly favoured who dwell in flowery lands and under softer skies. But there cannot be anything more beautiful than this. How delightful it is, too, for us to come upon a lonely wild flower that by its simple and frail beauty bids us to do as God has ordained us to do, and to blossom in His love, as it does!"

"Yes, Charles; life here has always seemed to me to carry with it the blessing of God—more, almost, than anywhere else. We are called upon to return thanks continually for His care of us, and for providing us with not only the necessities of life, but even with its luxuries and comforts. Though we are alone, we are not lonely, knowing that God is always with us." And Mrs. Paterson closed her eyes in grateful meditation.

"Mother dear, see what I have picked up," cried Linda, who had gone down to the edge of a stream that skirted the foot of the hill and flowed into the river. "It must be a relic of some hunter who in days gone by dropped it upon the shore."

The curio to which Linda directed her mother's atten-

tion was a dagger-shaped weapon made of ivory and steel, the metal being deeply coated with rust. It was nearly a foot long, but very slender and graceful in its lines and workmanship. The handle and socket were of graven steel, as was also the point; but the blade or body of the dagger, contrary to the usual custom, was made of ivory.

Hearing his daughter's exclamation of surprise at finding something, Mr. Paterson had returned round the rocky bend of the hill at the moment when Linda, coming up from below, was about to exhibit the dagger to her mother.

"It is a quaint and interesting weapon," he said. "How was it lying, Linda, when you found it?"

"Just the top of the handle sticking up out of the sand at the edge, papa. I expected to pick it up at once, but I found that it was securely wedged in the ground. It took all my strength to pull it out."

"It is curious," said her father reflectively. "We have never had anything like this at the fort or trading-posts, I am sure. It must have been lost by some hunter or explorer long ago."

"Like Jack?" asked Linda, looking up archly.

"Yes, like Jack, perhaps," assented her father, half smiling.

"We had better go on and make a show of berry-picking, at least," exclaimed Mr. Paterson, after viewing the relic. "I cannot bear a shiftless and aimless expedition like the present one, without order or industry."

"Yes, dear papa; let us go. Mother is dying to get down on her knees, and I am sure you are too. It is such

a pity to leave all the work to M'Diarmid and poor Sambo. Here's Sambo now.—What is it, Sambo?"

"I come back for to get de dinnah, miss," said Sambo.

"What a lovely lot of berries, Sambo!" exclaimed Mrs. Paterson, inspecting his basket. "They are beauties. We must get a good supply of them."

"De bushes is full of 'em," said the negro enthusiastically. "De ole Scotchy is gettin' a heap."

Mrs. Paterson and Linda laughed heartily at the new name for the faithful M'Diarmid, who never could bear the name "Scotchman," insisting that the men of Scotland were Scottishmen and not Scotchmen.

Sambo was left to get the dinner, as he called it, although it was to be nothing more than bread and butter, milk, and water from the spring, together with some of the berries. Juniper-berries and cranberries make a very toothsome salad when stewed together and allowed to cool before eating. A little sugar takes off the rough edge, without interfering with the piquant flavour. It would be about an hour before "Mith Linda" would tire of picking, Sambo thought, by which time he would be able to make and cool the fruit stew, and put everything on the improvised table for luncheon. He began by getting together all the twigs and dry moss of a combustible nature in the immediate neighbourhood. Thereupon he made two piles of stones, one on each side of the proposed fire, upon which to rest the cross-tree of the pot. It was impossible to drive stakes into the rock, so this expedient

had to be adopted, although it was crude and untidy, in the cook's opinion. The stones in the miniature pyramids came from the shelving shore of the stream below, and were carried up with a great deal of trouble; but this pleased Sambo the more, since it would earn the praises of his mistress and "Mith Linda." The stew was made and put in the spring to cool; the table-cloth was spread on the moss-covered rock, in the shade, behind a projecting wing of the hill; bits of broken rock were placed along the edges of the cloth to prevent its rising on the wings of any passing breeze and leaving for parts unknown; the knives and plates, together with the limited stock of table furniture, were laid upon the cloth. Sambo then sat down to wait till he should hear the voices of the returning berry-pickers, as the latter climbed the hill. He half dozed in a dream of Dixie, intermingled with berries and boiling pots. Presently he heard the gay laugh of "Mith Linda," when he bounded up like a panther, put the coffee-tin on the fire, alongside of which it had been standing full of fresh spring water, and then ran down to meet his mistress and carry her pail of berries.

"Ha! ha! Sambo," laughed Linda; "see what I have." She held up a pail of juniper-berries. "You thought I couldn't pick any. I know you did."

"Befoh de Lor', Mith Linda," cried Sambo, his eyes almost sticking out of his head in his effort to assure her that he never for one moment doubted her ability to pick anything on earth, "I declar to goodness I knowed you would pick as many as you wanted. It ain't no good

sayin' nothin', Mith Linda. I knowed what you would do. I knowed it."

Linda laughed good-humouredly at the poor negro's anxiety to be polite, giving him her basket. Mrs. Pater-son and her husband were walking quietly and leisurely behind, talking of days gone by, and watching the girlish figure of their daughter, now so soon to be a full-grown and lovely woman.

"What have you got for luncheon, Sambo?" asked Linda.

"Just dem berries, an' coffee, an' bread an' buttah. It's a stew, Mith Linda," said he.

"Oh, goodness!" sighed Linda, half-wearily dragging herself up to the level of the stopping-place; "I wonder if Jack has to do anything like this."

The word caught the negro's quick ear instantly.

"Ain't Mr. Ralston a-comin' home dis summah?" he asked, looking as serious as if he were personally concerned about it.

"Yes, he is, Sambo. He ought to be home by this time. Something may have happened to-him," said Linda.

"O Mith Linda, I hope dere ain't nothin' like dat. He's a brave man, and as good-lookin' as any niggah I evah seen," said Sambo enthusiastically.

"How dare you, Sambo, compare Mr. Ralston to a negro! Shame upon you!" exclaimed Linda half-angrily.

Sambo was much taken aback, and stood with his finger to his lip in mute amazement, gazing at his mistress, who pretended to be displeased. But as her face relaxed

into a smile, Sambo fell on his knees before her and clasped her hand, kissing it violently.

"There, there ! that will do," said Linda, in an appeased tone. "Now get everything ready. Master and mistress are here."

Whether it was the late interview, or the harrowing manner in which his feelings had been upset that in turn upset him, it is not possible to define exactly, but from some cause or other a catastrophe occurred that nearly had serious consequences.

Sambo, at his mistress's bidding, had run back to look at the coffee, when, through the carelessness or preoccupation of its owner, his foot struck one of the branches sticking out of the fire, which overturned one of the stone supports, whereupon down came the coffee on the fire, putting it dead out. When Sambo emerged from the steam, he was in dire distress. One of his hands had been badly burned in an attempt to save the coffee. However, Linda and her mother, who, with womanly forethought, had taken care to bring along a small tin box of vaseline, in case of scratches from the bushes, poured some of the soothing unguent upon the injured member, and after wrapping it up carefully, ordered Sambo to sit down, and to sit still, under pain of their displeasure. It was very amusing to see him obeying this injunction to the letter, and nursing his poor burned hand ; for, like all negroes, Sambo was very sensitive to pain.

The little picnic luncheon was finished without any coffee ; and not long after, M'Diarmid shouldered the

baskets, containing both tins and berries. Mr. Paterson carried a small basket of berries to relieve poor Sambo, who tried to bear the smarting of his wounded hand heroically. The homeward journey was made without accident, and all were very glad to get back to the post—Linda especially; for though she had enjoyed the day very much, she felt very tired.

Chapter XX.

A VISIT TO AN AGED ESKIMO.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fatigues of the berry-picking, Linda was so bright and early on the following day. One of their occasional visits to Nikalooka, an old Eskimo woman, near by, had been contemplated for a long time; and as it was likely to be quite interesting, both Linda and her mother were anxious to carry it out. Accordingly, possessing themselves of a few acceptable presents, amongst which was tobacco, the greatest luxury of the north, and accompanied by Davis, the blacksmith, as a sort of protector, they sallied out. The little tent village of the Eskimos to which they directed their steps was near the bank of the river, just out of reach of high tide. The tent in which Nikalooka lived was more than ordinarily large and commodious. It was about eight feet long and six wide at the base, running up to a ridge-peak at the top, the ridge-pole being held up by a bundle of long sticks at each end. The skins of which the tent was made were held in place by large stones ranged along the bottom. It was also a very well-made tent, the skins overlapping securely to keep out wind and rain. Nikalooka was very old, quite eighty or more, and

rarely ventured very far from the tent door. Once in a summer only she went to the post, at the request of Mrs. Paterson, who took a deep interest in the poor old Eskimo, and during the winter sent her many articles of food and clothing to help to keep body and soul together. She spent her days, when her son Nikilick and his wife with their children were away, in making boots of sealskin for them and deer-skin clothes.

Mrs. Paterson and Linda found her sitting at the tent door, working away as usual, her single eye close down to her work, as if it were a microscope.

"Okshini!" cried the old woman in a cracked voice, looking up with a broad grin, meaning thereby, "good-day."

The reply to this was an easy matter, being merely a repetition of the same word.

"Obluni okioko luck," continued Nikalooka, giving a cackle of satisfaction at the honour paid her. As this meant that the day was very warm, Linda cried out readily, "Ahila," which is equivalent in English to "yes, it is." Nikalooka having recovered her equanimity, pointed, according to Eskimo etiquette, to a pack of skins, but Mrs. Paterson, being afraid of contamination, bowed her acknowledgments and continued standing.

"Pierak nan ne?" asked Mrs. Paterson, inquiring for Nikilick.

"Ta mane tokto petilick," replied Nikalooka, pointing across the river, meaning that Nikilick was amongst the deer. Just exactly what to say to this neither Mrs. Paterson nor Linda knew; but after a frantic racking of her

brain, Linda cried "Emile," or "Good-luck." This pleased the old woman very much, and she broke into a long account of something of which her visitors had no idea whatever. As the interview had been so far successful, and not wishing to spoil it, Mrs. Paterson made ready to depart, and gave Nikalooka some print for a dress, at which the old woman was beside herself with joy; but when Linda handed her a plug of tobacco, her delight was quite inexpressible. "Okshini!" said Linda; to which the old woman replied, "Okshini! okshini! okshini!" with that peculiar click in the throat characteristic of the Eskimo.

Nikalooka had one son, Nikilick, a man now nearly fifty years of age. His daughters, Ninik and Tolak, were aged sixteen and eighteen years respectively, and not unlike their mother, who was as fine a specimen of a matron as any race of whatever colour can boast. Her temper was always unruffled, no matter what happened, and her face bore the serene expression of one who had found out the secret of a happy life—namely, contentment. Her daughters were industrious, and at this season were engaged in picking berries, which they dried for consumption in winter. Nikilick's two sons, aged eleven and eight, usually played at what they would be when men; but sometimes their father took them with him hunting, when it was astonishing how well they bore the fatigue.

Chapter XXI.

RETURN OF THE EXPLORERS.

THE days were beginning to shorten quite noticeably, when one day the explorers again returned as unexpectedly as before. The canoeists had landed before being observed from the post. Mr. Paterson was informed of their return, and went down to meet them.

"Well, Jack," said Mr. Paterson, as soon as he arrived within hailing distance, "bad news again, eh?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, more than half abashed by his second failure. "The Indians attacked us again."

"And well for us that we didna get our wizens slit, Mr. Paterson," exclaimed Morrison in a bold, straightforward way. "The sneakin' deevils had us all in a cave, and Mr. Ralston is shot."

"Shot!" exclaimed Mr. Paterson. "Dear me; let me see it."

But Jack cried out, "It is nothing, sir, really nothing—only a flesh wound."

However, Mr. Paterson determined to see the injured limb. When it was unwrapped, and he saw that, though only a flesh wound, it was a deep and dangerous one

that might readily have nasty consequences, he took Jack by the other arm and led him to the post.

"See what we have here, Linda," he exclaimed, as Linda appeared at the window—"a wounded man."

"What! Jack wounded?" she cried, as she came out to meet them and make inquiries.

"No," said Jack, laughing; "not fatally nor even badly."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Paterson authoritatively, "it must be attended to.—Come, Linda; don't forget, my dear, that woman's first duty is to relieve suffering."

Linda was gone, as the last word fell from her father's lips, and in a few minutes returned with a package of lint, a little housewife containing her scissors, bandages already made for emergencies, and pins. Jack sat down as he was bidden, and submitted to the operation of a proper dressing, which, indeed, his wounded arm required much more than he was aware of or prepared to admit. The coarse and bloody covering was removed, and hot water squeezed through a sponge over the wound till it looked sweet and clear.

"Do tell me about it all," said Linda, as she dressed and bound it up.

Jack felt as if the wound were a cheap price at which to purchase this kindness and solicitude.

"We were making headway nicely," said Jack, "when we became aware of the approach of the Indians. At first we did not know if their intentions were pacific or otherwise; but rightly suspecting that they were not, we fell back on a cave which we had discovered near at hand."

"Oh, how fortunate!" exclaimed Linda.

"Yes, ~~it~~ was fortunate, for they greatly outnumbered us; and had it not been for the cave, they could easily have taken us. However, to make a long story short, we killed a sentry placed by them down at the landing-place, and were able to escape under cover of night."

"And did you see them again?"

"No. We didn't catch sight of them again, but we heard them. Next day we had made good our escape, and here we are."

"But you didn't tell me how it was that you were wounded?" said Linda.

"It was the sentry who shot me. Half an inch more and it would have gone through my head," said Jack.

"Ugh!" cried Linda, and she blushed slightly at her own impetuosity. "There! you are all right now," she said, as she gave the wrapped arm a little pat to make everything snug and smooth.—"What do you think of that, mamma?"

"It is very nice and comfortable, and very kind of you, Linda," said Jack, interposing.

"Come, Linda," cried Mr. Paterson. "Here are some of your favourites."

A number of Indians with one squaw were approaching the fort. Indians, with their motley dress and strange appearance, always excited the attention though not the admiration of Linda—hence her father's jocular description of them as her favourites. They walked up to the entrance gate of the enclosure, and stood waiting,

ranged in a row. They were members of a band from the east, and from frequent meeting with white traders and travellers some of them had picked up portions of dress, which they had put on, not so much according to the fashion of the whites as to their own taste and convenience. They were of a tall race, these people, and spare, the largest man amongst them being over six feet, and not weighing more than eleven stone. Their faces wore a mystified not to say stupid look, and their prominent cheek-bones made their little eyes look very small. Their limbs, though very slim, were quite straight, and were covered by deerskin trousers, or the tattered and patched remnants of the garments of the white man. As it was summer, they wore nothing on their feet. One or two had deerskin jerkins, others had old shirts, and one had a waistcoat. But the most striking feature of their apparel, and a fashion to some extent prevalent amongst all northern Indians, was the wearing of the shirts outside the trousers like skirts. To see men got up in such a way at any time was laughable enough, but on this occasion the tall, sedate exponents of the Indian fashion, standing in a row, looked so absurd that Linda ran to her mother, stifling her laughter with her handkerchief.

"O mamma, do come and see them. They are the funniest lot we have seen yet."

As Jack was the best trader amongst the whites resident at the post, and as he was a great favourite with the red men generally, on account of his scrupulous sense of justice and fair play, he had long occupied the position of chief

trader there. On this occasion, though lately arrived and with a wounded arm, he fell to work at once; and taking Mowat with him, he went with the Indians over to the goods house. Throwing the bare hides (the thin coating of summer hair having been removed) one by one in a heap on the floor, they were valued as they fell, and the articles given in trade set aside. In an hour's time the trade had been completed, and the weird band took its departure.

Visits of an equally sudden though not unexpected character were frequent, and when the backs of the visitors were turned to the post, no further thought was taken of them by the inmates.

The evening was lovely, and with the twilight came a stillness in the air that necessitated the lighting of a fire in the fireplace. The feeling of coziness and of the companionship of home engendered by the summer evening fire caused Linda to break from her reverie.

"I do believe, papa, that, after all, I like the cold season of autumn and winter, the latter especially, more than spring and summer."

"Oh no, Linda dear," interposed her mother. "Think of being shut up instead of being free to go where one pleases, as, with certain limitations, we can in summer; and think of the long, long days and the short, short ones."

"I have thought of them, mother, and it has seemed to me, in spite, dearest mother, of what you say of the length and shortness of the days, that the feeling of home leaves us in summer and returns in the autumn. I do so love home."

"How would you like to be a squaw?" inquired Mr. Paterson.

Everybody laughed. Mr. Paterson was reading his weekly *Times*, just a year old, but yet news to him.

"The very thought of it is horrid," exclaimed Linda, drawing up her shoulders in an expressive shudder.

"Mother," said Mr. Paterson, turning to his wife, with a twinkle in his eye, "if you are looking for supporters of your view of the question, I have no doubt you can find some at the village, or amongst the squaws."

"O papa!" exclaimed Linda, "how can you recommend such things to mamma?"

"Ah! that's the way," said Mr. Paterson, with a mock sigh, and turning over a new leaf, "with you women. You are so illogical. I am simply saying that you are giving your opinion on the relative merits of winter and summer without taking into consideration all the evidence before you. If you were a squaw, as I suggested, probably you would think differently."

"But, papa dear," remonstrated Linda, looking at her father with eyes wide open, "I was not speaking of the squaws, but only of ourselves."

"Bravo, Linda," exclaimed her father; "I see that you have a logical head after all, and take after your mother."

Mr. Paterson often took up points in the course of conversation in this manner, and threshed them out for the benefit of his daughter, in order that her wits might not grow stagnant for want of mixing with people of education.

"Jack," said Mr. Paterson after a pause, "I wish you would begin your duties again by seeing how the staff has been getting along in your absence. From what you say, I think we had better give up the idea of making an exploration into the unknown region. If we make the attempt again next year, we shall have to send a larger force to enable us to overcome all opposition. They seem to be determined not to allow the Company to obtain a foothold in the last vestige of their exclusive possession."

Chapter XXII.

A BUSY TIME AT FORT HOPE.

THE season was now opening for fishing at the mouth of the river. About the tenth of August the salmon begin to go up the river to spawn, and are caught by the natives in vast quantities. The Eskimos living in the little village near the fort get their large skin-boats ready, and pile into them everything they own—nets, dogs, children, and wives. The boats are large and steady. When each Eskimo and his freighted boat is ready, the Company's steam-launch takes them in chain-tow and drops them off one by one as they reach the places called "fishing-stations." These consist merely of a temporary shelter for the Eskimo and his family, and a drying-place for nets. The nets being from thirty to forty fathoms long are not easy to handle. It would naturally occur to one that the fishermen at the mouth of the river would catch the bulk of the salmon before they had a chance to ascend; but such is not the case. The river is very wide for a long distance up, and the fish dart in and out from shore in a peculiar zigzag fashion, so that it is a matter of luck where the bulk of the fish are caught, as

in all such cases the number averages pretty much the same everywhere in the end. The nets are as usual buoyed up on the upper side and to within a few feet of the surface, or, properly speaking, anchored down a few feet below the surface. One end is fastened shoreward, and the other, the full length of the net, out in the river. Great care is exercised to take the fish out before low tide, as crows and gulls innumerable are in waiting to devour them. Gulls devote their attention to the eyes of the fish to such an extent that in a short time the bulk of the fish are so blemished as to be useless to the Company in a commercial way.

"I think we're going to have a big run this year," said Mr. Coleridge, who had come in to have a chat with his chief officer before giving final instructions.

"I hope so indeed," replied Mr. Paterson. "If we secure a good cargo of whale oil as well, we shall make as fine a return to headquarters as they could wish for."

"A little Englishman named Rowley has come in from George River way, where he moved to last year from Rigolette. He seems a decent sort, but is short of a good many things in the way of supplies and equipment," continued Coleridge.

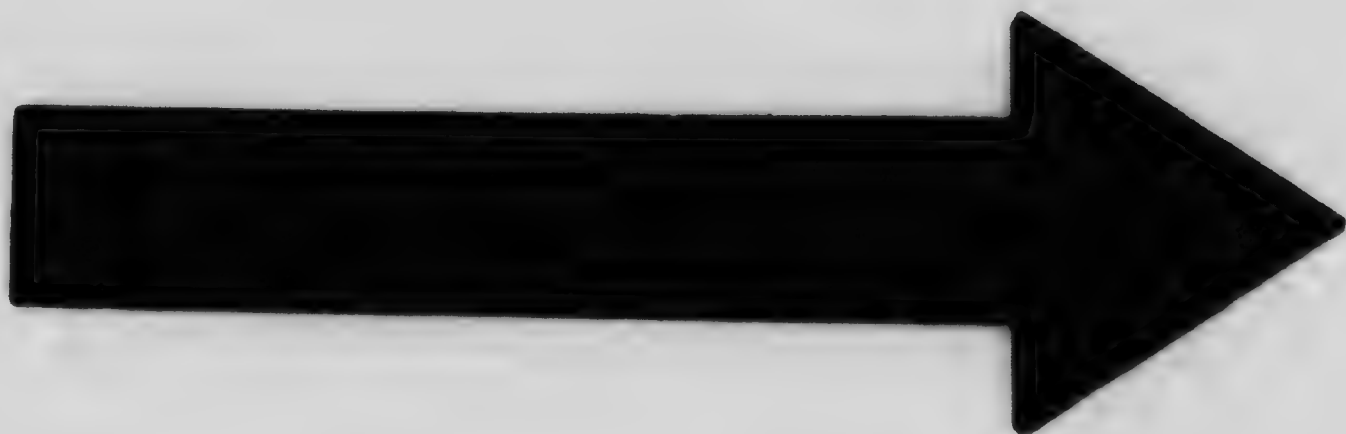
"Oh, well, give him what you like," said Mr. Paterson, who was of a large-hearted, generous disposition, and always anxious to help a deserving man. "If it exceeds the usual trade advance, charge it against my account."

"Very well, sir; and shall Mr. Ralston go in the launch to-morrow?"

"No; I think you had better go," said Mr. Paterson, looking at the ceiling thoughtfully. "You see Ralston has had a rather hard time of it lately, and had better nurse his wound."

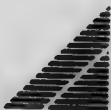
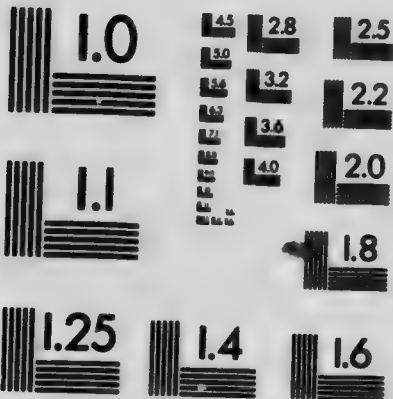
"Yes, sir," said Coleridge, turning on his heel in vexation, and thinking how convenient it was for Jack to have a wound which would enable him to stay at the post under the care of Linda Paterson. "I'll get even with that fellow yet," he added to himself, as he got out of earshot.

It was a strange lot of humans that came down to the water's edge on the following morning to embark in their skin-boats and await the coming of the launch to pick them up. Yet, withal, an honester lot of people is not to be found in the world. Homely they were to ugliness, men, women, and children; but what they lacked in symmetry of form and feature they made up in patience, fortitude, frankness, and a rare power of physical endurance. As the launch came along under the command of Mr. Coleridge, the men caught hold of the tow-line, and fastening their boats to it lay back lazily amongst dogs, skins, and families, lighting their pipes, and awaiting with complacent delight a successful fishing season, when the salmon, pouring into the store-houses at Fort Hope, should be salted away for export, and placed to their credit. To Jack Ralston, as chief clerk, fell the arduous task of keeping strict account of all the fish sent in. The cooper in the cooper-shop was busy as a nailer, putting casks in trim and making



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new ones. Davis, the blacksmith, had no time to spare either. It was his busiest season, and it seemed as if repairs would never be finished. It was "Davis, do this," and "Davis, I wish you would hurry with this," and "Be sure and let us have the other thing by the day after to-morrow," till Davis finally made up his mind to quit the "service;" but as this threat was made regularly once a year, no further notice was ever taken of it. As for Sambo, this being his "easy" season, as he called it, he busied himself about his own affairs chiefly. The poor fellow could not write, and besides having a mother and sisters, he had a sweetheart in Toronto, whom he had met when he was apprentice to a barber in Queen Street. He was anxious to do as the others did, and send them letters full of his doings and remembrances. Linda very good-naturedly used to help him out of this difficulty and pen his various epistles for him. They afforded an immense amount of amusement, and although Mrs. Paterson frowned on the playful breaches of confidence, she joined with her daughter in many a harmless joke at Sambo's expense. The English language was by no means adequate to the expression of his feelings, and it required ever so much scratching of his woolly pate to find the right word before Linda would come to his rescue and supply it. One very singular feature of this correspondence was that it was all on one side, no answer as yet having come from "the lady." But that did not seem to bate a jot of Sambo's enthusiasm. His imagination was so

vivid that it overleaped space without the assistance of any apparent medium, just like the new system of wireless telegraphy. Like most negroes, Sambo had a fine musical voice, which, as we have said, was occasionally made use of both at church and upon secular occasions to increase both the volume and the sweetness of the general melody. At the finish of the letter he would sing a little Southern ditty in honour of his sweetheart, all of which was carefully noted down by the amanuensis. These things show how tender the heart is in all conditions of life, and that kindly feelings are not necessarily allied with intellectual qualities. The two great divisions of mankind are the gentle and the brutal, not the intellectual and the un-intellectual. Some of the greatest villains of the world have been very intelligent, while some of the sweetest of mankind could boast of no particular ability. Of course this does not always follow, but it shows where the dividing-line really is.

Not many minutes had elapsed after the occasion of the letter-writing which we have just referred to, when Sambo burst into the room where Linda Paterson was still sitting. His eyes were balls of ivory on a background of charcoal.

"Mith Linda, dat Scotchman says he'th gwine to kill dis niggah shuah!" he exclaimed vehemently.

"Nonsense," said Linda. "He's only trying to frighten you."

"No, he ain't, Mith Linda. He'th—he'th sharpenin' a crowbar in the blackthmith shop. He'th gwine to kill me shuah."

"Do you really think, Sambo, that M'Diarmid would hurt you?"

"Yeth he would, Mith Linda. He would. He's gwine to, I tell you, Mith Linda; shuah's yer born."

"Go and see master about it, Sambo. He'll stop him."

"Yeth, mith," said Sambo, nodding his head, and hurrying away to his master's quarters.

It is hardly necessary to state that, in spite of his dislike of the negro, M'Diarmid had no such idea as Sambo affirmed he had. It was merely a case of Sambo's being in the way again, for, like simple folk generally, he was intensely curious, and given to peeping into other people's business. M'Diarmid was very fond of doing his chores, as he called his personal domestic wants and requirements, quietly and alone; but no sooner did he get well settled down to work than Sambo's curiosity would bring the negro into the neighbourhood, when, as a consequence, all sorts of expedients to frighten him off were adopted, and all sorts of uproars resulted.

In a few days the launch returned to the stations and brought back the first cargo of fish. As hoped for, the supply was proving a bountiful one, giving promise of all kinds of happiness and comfort for the ensuing winter for the people at the post and in the Company's service, as well as for the poor toilers who lived in skin-tents and snow-houses.

One is prompted to moralize at this juncture upon the blessings of home and home comforts. Many a man who, as a youth, was fired by a desire to go out to remote regions

in search of his fortune, looks back mayhap with some degree of pride upon his pluck in leaving home and facing the world, its temptations, and its trials boldly, and as a man should. But how often does he look back, too, from the autumn of his days to the spring of his youth, and feel how sweet home then was—a thing he never realized when there, but how often since! His chief regret, and perhaps his only regret, taking into consideration all the necessities of the case, is not that he had to leave home and be a man, but that he did not, when a boy at home, seek to build up the love of those about him. This, above all earthly things, is the consolation of life—to be able to look back upon a pleased and happy mother, a proud father, and affectionate brothers and sisters. Without it one is like a derelict of fortune. It is not necessary to be rich to have this. The poorest may have it. It lives in the skin-tents and snow-houses of the Eskimos even to a greater degree than in the houses of the rich and well-to-do. And how fortunate it is that one may renew the love of home in the hearts and homes of others! Such had been the experience of Jack Ralston, who, by his manly bearing and frank nature, had won the esteem of more than one member of the isolated and happy community of Fort Hope. How inexpressibly sad it is when death threatens to destroy these little unions of hearts and souls—a danger which the next chapter will give an account of!

Chapter XXIII.

DAYS OF MOURNING.

FOR some weeks previous Mrs. Paterson had not been looking well. The failure of her appetite soon began to alarm her husband, who exhausted his skill in efforts to bring back the roses to her cheeks and the light in her loving eyes. It was now the end of August, and although Mr. Paterson had determined to send his wife by the first ship in company with Linda to Montreal for a change of air and proper medical treatment, no whaler had appeared or stray trading-vessel, and it was a long time to wait till the *Ledic* should be on her way home again. It was only a month, it was true; but, judging by the previous month, Mrs. Paterson would not then be able to go. Each day added to her weakness and to the feverish anxiety of Mr. Paterson and Linda. Jack noticed with grief the rapid decline of Mrs. Paterson's health and the unhappiness that had begun to hang like a funeral pall over the erstwhile happy family. He had attended to the inflow of fish from the fishing-stations with quiet business-like promptitude and regularity, not seeking to disturb the mind of his master and friend by useless questionings, or of Linda, by a condolence that

might precipitate the grief she was so valiantly holding in check; but nevertheless, by day and night, he revolved the circumstances in his mind. Even amidst the cares of the busy day he did not lose sight of the necessity of doing something to forestall the grim spectre that stood awaiting the time of death and desolation. There was a physician of some repute at Davis Inlet; but Davis Inlet was a long distance off—more than seven hundred miles through a wilderness by land, and nearly eight hundred by water. The land journey was not to be thought of. Even if he reached Davis Inlet by land, the doctor might not be willing or able to undertake an overland journey in return. But what was to prevent the sea-trip? He laid the matter before Mr. Paterson, who thankfully embraced the proposal. The difficulties in the path were gone over one by one. An exposed and stormy coast gave promise of danger and long delay.

"What boat will you take?" asked Mr. Paterson.

"The *Sealer*, sir," answered Jack. "She is schooner-rigged, and better than anything we have."

"Yes. She is the best and the swiftest," said Mr. Paterson. "You will be careful in choosing your crew."

"Can you spare Mowat, sir?"

"Yes, certainly, I can spare him; but do you think he is as good in a sea-boat as in a canoe?"

"He is the best skipper, to my mind, sir. He sailed her when she walked away from the *Latona*, said to be a very fast one."

"At any rate, you seem to have very great faith in

him. Take him, Jack. Suit yourself," said Mr. Paterson. "Whom else will you take?"

"I think, sir, with three Eskimos I can do very well. That will enable us to sleep, and they know the coast," replied Jack.

"Are there many in now? Are they not nearly all at the stations?" inquired Mr. Paterson.

"Yes, sir; but they will come at once when they know it is for you."

"Thank you, Jack. I am glad they think so well of me. But you may promise them a liberal reward. Now, since you have decided, don't delay, my dear boy. I only hope that we are not too late."

"I hope not, sir," said Jack, as he hastened away to complete his crew and load his supplies.

The *Sealer* was of less than a ton burden, but, as Jack Ralston remarked, uncommonly fast. By the next tide she was on her way down the river, in the hands of Jack and Mowat, to pick up three Eskimos to whom Jack had sent word immediately on the decision being come to about going. All possible haste was made, and by the next tide the *Sealer* was well on her perilous trip, skirting the coast of Northern Labrador, and ready to risk the short cuts across the mouths of deep bays, in order to reach her destination and be back in time. Favouring winds were blowing at the outset and continued almost without abatement. Davis Inlet was reached at length without mishap. The *Sealer*, with the Company's physician aboard, bore away for Fort Hope, and with a strong beam

wind dashed the water into foam, as hour after hour and day after day, with the exception of but one day of calm, she spun along on her homeward voyage. What was the pleasure of hope in the breasts of both Linda and her father when the *Sealer* loomed in the distance on the river and a rifle-shot proclaimed her return!

The advent of Dr. Smith, together with the agitation aroused by the rapidly-declining health of Mrs. Paterson, caused the feelings of the white population of Fort Hope to be strung to the highest pitch. Though Sambo, poor fellow, could not be classed with the white population, his sympathy was not the less keen, for Mrs. Paterson was beloved by one and all in and near the post for her kindness towards all, and her care of the poor and sick in particular. The pronouncement of Dr. Smith was anxiously awaited. Morrison and M'Diarmid talked over the matter with misgiving. True to their natures, nurtured amid the softness and quiet of the woods, neither Pilo nor Mowat spoke of the illness of Mrs. Paterson, though their anxiety was plainly manifested in their sad and distressed looks. Mr. Paterson came out of the sick-room and walked up to Jack, who waited in the outer room for any news of the invalid. In reply to Jack's expectant look he merely shook his head.

"Is the doctor not sanguine?" inquired Jack timidly.

"No," said Mr. Paterson bravely. "He says my poor wife has but a short time to live. It is Bright's disease, and has made rapid headway."

"Oh, how sad!" exclaimed Jack.

Mr. Paterson could say no more, but passed on into his own room. Jack fancied he could hear poor Linda weeping quietly. Now and then the muffled sound of a half-stifled sob reached his ear. It was all inexpressibly distressing. It was the first great blow to the community of Fort Hope. Dr. Smith remained all that day and the next; but as he had no hope, preparations were made to take him back to Davis Inlet. Fortunately, at this juncture, as was half expected, the *Ledic* hove in sight at the mouth of the river, and by noon of the following day was anchored opposite the post. Supplies were taken ashore, and salmon, furs, and pelts put aboard with as little noise as possible, lest the sound of loading and unloading, reflected by the high hills in the vicinity and rendered doubly loud and distinct, should disturb the sufferer. Dr. Smith returned in the *Ledic*. Her parting gun, fired from well down the river, sounded like the knell of death to those who watched by the bed of the invalid.

At last, one morning Mr. Paterson approached Jack and told him of the end of all their hopes. Mrs. Paterson had died, as the doctor had thought likely, of heart failure brought on by the disease. As Jack went out to inform the men and to prevent the arrival of trading-parties till after the funeral, he was filled with distress at the loss sustained, and with admiration for his master's fortitude under such trying circumstances.

There was no parade about the funeral, no hearse to carry the body, nor carriages to bear the mourners. The

burial-ground was just outside of the fort, underneath the overhanging side of a lofty hill. It was a picturesque spot, and was well chosen as a temporary resting-place, since, when the time came for Mr. Paterson's retirement and superannuation, he intended to enclose his wife's remains in a leaden casket, and transport them to whatever spot he might choose to finally settle down in. But this was not known nor thought of by those participating in what, after all, really were the last sad rites, wherever the poor body might finally rest. The white servants bore the coffin, while Mr. Paterson, with Linda closely veiled, walked immediately behind, Mr. Coleridge and Jack reverentially bringing up the rear. Linda was very brave; and when her father read the touching and beautiful burial-service of the Church of England she gave no sign of unsubdued emotion, excepting perhaps, a slight convulsive sob as the words "dust to dust" were accompanied by the hoarse, rattling sound of earth upon the coffin. When the service was over, Jack and Mr. Coleridge withdrew, to leave the mourners to take their last farewell. The servants, having filled the grave and banked it solidly, were quietly dismissed. Just as he stepped into the entrance of the fort, Jack looked back again upon the scene, where two figures still stood by the grave-side. It was with difficulty that he suppressed the rising tear.

Chapter XXIV.

GATHERING TROUBLES.

A NEW life had dawned for Linda. It was now no longer possible for her to be simply the loving child of a happy mother. She was a woman in years now, and must henceforth be a woman in fact. Though ever desirous of lifting her father out of the gloom into which he had settled since her mother's death, she could not herself always assume at will a gaiety of manner suitable to such a desire. The foreboding of a decline in her father's health was of more importance than she knew, since the well-controlled system of the Company in these wild regions was to suffer more than one rude shock of a more or less desperate character. Reports were beginning to come in of the wicked conduct of restless Indians, who, bent on revenge and plunder, had been making inroads, according to their ancient custom, upon the Eskimos along the eastern coast; and although they had been repulsed, or at any rate had retreated, the prosperity in recent years of the Eskimos had so excited their cupidity that help had at length been asked for of Mr. Paterson.

This new problem was a perplexing one. To take sides even with the right and against the wrong is not always

possible, when one is a commandant of another's forces, and responsible for another's goods. What would the Company advise? That was the question. Mr. Paterson had foreseen trouble, nay, had, as we know, already experienced it, and had communicated with the chief authorities, who had given him instructions that really amounted to this: "Do the best you can. You are on the spot. Of course we shall have to look to you."

The conduct of the Nauscopees and Muskegons, in attacking the parties of exploration, was ample evidence also of the determined hostility of the red men to any attempt to extend the Company's business in a north-westerly direction. Relying upon a just cause, upon the mutual benefit to be derived from the extension of the Company's posts, and upon a legitimate, nay, generous, system of trading and loaning, it had confidently been hoped that the Indians, unmanageable though they usually are, especially in their wild state, would nevertheless see the benefit to be derived from a fair trade and barter, and take advantage of it. But not so. Forays, maraudings, and war are the true stock-in-trade of the Indian, in whom nature has established no craving after the blessings of peace.

Mr. Paterson therefore, though sore against his will, was compelled at last to recognize the actual state of affairs, and to take measures for a change. The Eskimos, though brave, could not carry on their hunting and fishing and wage war at the same time; hence they were in danger of perishing either by the weapons of the enemy or from

famine. Their extinction meant the ruin of the Company's profitable trade in all Ungava. From motives of business therefore, as well as from motives of humanity, it was necessary for the Hudson Bay Company to take the offensive without delay. A conclusion was reached the more hastily, by reason of the arrival at the post of an Eskimo messenger from the north-east coast.

One day a short, thick-set stranger presented himself timidly at the trade-gate. He bore every trace of a long and severe journey. His clothes consisted of deerskin leggings badly frayed and torn, of a nondescript sort of garment that seemed to be a patchwork of fur and cloth, and in lieu of any artificial head-covering he had an immensely thick head of hair that streamed down over his eyes and ears. His sealskin boots were worn to shreds, and his general appearance was desolate and abject in the extreme.

Jack stood and looked at him for a moment. The stranger was evidently no trader. He made no attempt to speak, so Jack spoke to him in English. No sign of understanding escaped the Eskimo. Thereupon Jack began in Eskimo, when the stolid face of the messenger lighted up with pleasure and recognition. We give a free translation of the conversation.

"Do you come to trade?"

"No. I come from the Eskimos to see fort."

"What do you want?"

"The Eskimos want help."

"What! Provisions? Why don't you bring in fish?"

"No, not fish, but guns."

"Guns!" exclaimed Jack. "What do you expect to do with them?"

"Fight Indians," replied the Eskimo sententiously.

Jack's duty in such a case as this was to conduct the messenger to Mr. Paterson, who reserved the exclusive right in all matters outside the ordinary channels of trade, not only of deciding what was to be done, but of discussing the affair in the first instance. The wisdom of such a course is obvious, preventing as it did a pledge of the Company where none should be given, and promises of assistance arising out of private prejudices or quarrels likely to be compromising and injurious in their effects. Hence Jack bade the visitor to wait while he spoke to the master.

"There is an Eskimo here wanting guns to fight the Indians with. Shall I bring him in, sir?" asked Jack, as Mr. Paterson turned round from his desk and looked inquiringly at him.

"Oh, I suppose so. What does he look like?" asked Mr. Paterson.

"He's a poor, miserable, worn-out-looking man about four feet high."

"Show him in. Wait a moment. I'll go out with you," and Mr. Paterson put down his pen and arose.

"He can't speak English at all," remarked Jack, as they went through the house.

"Then you must do the interpreting. It's too much trouble to talk Eskimo," said Mr. Paterson. "Begin where you left off."

"How many guns do you want?" began Jack.

"I want men with guns," said the Eskimo.

"What do you mean?" inquired Jack, almost annoyed at the obtuseness of the visitor. "Do you know Ualick?"

"Yes. Ualick our big man. He send me."

"Why on earth didn't you say so before? Did Ualick really send you, and what for?"

"The Indians with Tigerface come and kill us. We are not able to defend ourselves. They are camped inland, and say they will kill us before the snow comes," replied the Eskimo.

"Then he wants us to send men to help him fight the Indians?" Jack continued.

"Yes, yes," said the Eskimo, nodding his head vigorously.

Jack waited for Mr. Paterson's suggestion.

"This is a serious business. Ask him when they must have the help, and if guns and ammunition won't do," said Mr. Paterson.

Jack put the question.

"He says not. He says that the Indians have killed a good many, and that they cannot hold out if the Indians return with increased numbers."

"Very well, then. Find out exactly where Ualick and his people are, and I will send a party of our Eskimos and some of our own men round by the coast. Tell him that. Do you think he is reliable?"

"Well, sir, he seems to be telling the truth," returned Jack. "They don't usually lie."

"Give him the usual feed, and if he still sticks to his story in the morning, I'll send a party to their assistance. Then let him go," said Mr. Paterson.

"Pardon me, sir, for suggesting, but wouldn't it be well to keep him, to show us where Ualick's people are, in case of necessity," said Jack.

"It would certainly. I overlooked that. Tell him then, he is to go with the party, and hand him over to Omitick in the village."

Jack went off to carry out his instructions, while Mr. Paterson returned to his study to think over the matter before committing himself too far.

Chapter XXV.

SAMBO FIGURES AS A "HIGHER CRITIC."

THE Eskimo messenger proved to be the right man in the right place, as the saying is, for not only did he succeed in procuring assistance for his besieged countrymen, but his artless demeanour and evident truthfulness attracted the very active sympathy of Jack Ralston, who made up his mind, then and there, that he would give the red men a taste of bullying that would keep them in their own country for some time to come.

Omitick, the Eskimo in the village to whose care Ualick's messenger had been committed, was roused to a high pitch of excitement, and soon the fort and the whole neighbourhood was ablaze with indignation and astir with warlike preparations. The village Eskimos, both men and women, came to the fort in numbers, begging to be taken on the expedition, which they never for a moment doubted would be sent by the kind white master of the fort, in aid of their persecuted countrymen. What the women expected to do, it would be hard to say; but the men were in earnest, which with an Eskimo means something. They could hardly be persuaded to go back to their tents, so great was their excitement.

It is surprising how the prejudice of colour pervades the different races of mankind. Whites hate blacks, and blacks hate yellows. Sambo was envious of the consideration always shown at the fort to the Eskimos, and the throng of that people now filling every nook and cranny was more than he could bear with equanimity.

"Massa Ralston, is dem gwine to be 'lowed to stay in the surroundin's of de fort?" inquired he of Jack Ralston, to whom he poured out his tale of woe whenever he had any to pour.

"Why, you wouldn't turn the poor Eskimos away, would you, Sambo?" said Jack, laughing.

"Yeth, I would. Dere ain't no room for yellow people. Dere's jus' room for niggahs and white peoples," replied Sambo emphatically.

"But what would you think if the white people said that there was only room for them, and none for you?"

"Dey do say it," said Sambo, but not comprehending the force of the argument.

"What do you think of it, then?"

"I'se don't tink nothin', Massa Ralston. I ain't no scholard, but I do tink dat dem Skimos oughter keef demselves. Dey ain't no Christians. Is dey now, M. Ralston?"

Sambo evidently thought he had a poser for Jack, and smiled good-naturedly.

"It depends a good deal," began Jack, "upon what you call a Christian."

"No it ain't, Massa Ralston. De Bible say nothin' 'bout Skimos. I never heerd it did."

"Does it say anything about niggers, Sambo?"

"Yeth, it do, Massa Ralston. It say in de Bible dat darkness covered de face of de earth."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Jack, in a loud and prolonged roar at the "higher criticism" of the dusky son of the south.

Sambo looked at him in amazement, his eyes wide open, and his head on one side, in the attitude of a listener.

"Do you think that the face of the earth is the face of the negro?"

"Yeth, sah, I do. At dem times dere was no white men, and what else could it mean? De face of de earth means de faces of de people of de earth. De preacher said so. It's gollical," said Sambo, swinging his hands up and down like a windmill.

Jack was about to burst out laughing again, but he was struck with the sound of the last word, and paused.

"What's that, Sambo? Gollical? What in the name of goodness is that?"

"Gollical's gollical," said Sambo. "It ain't true."

"Oh! allegorical you mean," fairly shouted Jack, in amusement. "You'll do, Sambo. You win the argument. But it wouldn't do to turn the Skimos out. The Company wouldn't like it. They expect us to do all we can for them."

"All right, Massa Ralston. It's jus' as you say. I ain't a-gwine ginst de Company. No, you bet, I ain't."

"That's right, Sambo. And now we must turn our attention to getting supplies aboard the launch."

"Who's gwine?" asked Sambo.

"I don't know. Would you like to go and fight the Indians?"

"Yeth! golly! you bet," exclaimed Sambo; but suddenly remembering that, if he left the post, "Mith Linda" would have to do the cooking, he changed his mind. "I gueth I'd better stay though, Massa Ralston. Dere ain't nobody to fend Massa Paterson and Mith Linda if we all go."

"That's right," said Jack, smiling; "you take good care of them, and see that no harm comes over them."

"You bet I will, Massa Ralston."

Sambo was evidently in the humour for betting.

Jack saw Mr. Paterson standing at his house door, looking as if he wished to speak to him, so he went over.

"Are your preparations well under way, Jack? How soon do you expect to be ready? I've been thinking over this report, and on turning up the journals I find that a very similar enterprise was undertaken about twelve years ago, with the same object, and that the only matter of regret with regard to it was that it had delayed so long in setting out that many Eskimos had been killed and their villages burned before the assistance arrived. So I hope you will make all haste. It greatly relieves my mind with respect to the policy of it. However, we must now make it our object to go on with as much haste and thoroughness as prudence will allow."

"Yes, sir," answered Jack ; "everything is about ready. My Eskimos are only too eager to start. Have you finally decided who are to go with me of the men ?"

"Whom would you like ?" replied Mr. Paterson.

Jack had hoped that Mr. Paterson would ask him just such a question, as he did not want Mowat and Pilo to be left out.

"Can you spare Mowat and Pilo, sir ?" he inquired.

"Yes ; and would you like Mr. Coleridge ?" said Mr. Paterson.

"I think not, sir. I should rather have a fighting man. I think we three with the Eskimos could about do it, sir ; and if we stock up for any length of time the little craft will scarcely hold more. With the explosive bullets, I have no fear of being taken."

"You won't use them in attack, I suppose," suggested Mr. Paterson, who could not bear the thought of the terrible wounds made by these missiles.

"Oh no, sir. I do not think it belongs to civilized warfare yet, but in defence I think it permissible," said Jack, rather wondering where the civilized part of war really came in.

At this moment Linda came out. She was paler than she used to be, but extremely beautiful. Jack looked at her with emotion. It was sad to think of her family ties being broken one by one. If anything happened to her father, her position in this remote region might easily be desperate. Moreover, he loved her with all the fervour of a frank and earnest nature.

"Ha, Linda," exclaimed her father cheerily, "what have you come to tell us? What you know of fighting Indians?"

"Dear daddy," cried his daughter, in alarm, "are the Indians about to attack us?"

"Not yet, my dear; but we can't tell what they may try to do before they finish," said he.

"Do tell me, papa, what you mean. Are you really in earnest?" cried Linda.

"Yes, indeed; I am in earnest," replied he. "Jack is going out against Tigerface in an hour."

"O Jack!" said Linda, and then a little blush half mounted to her cheek.

"Now, Jack, don't delay. I'll tell Linda all about it presently. But in the meantime I'm anxious to see you step aboard and be off."

The tone in which Mr. Paterson gave utterance to this remark modified somewhat the sharpness of the reproof. However, Jack immediately said "good-bye," without even venturing to shake hands; and in half an hour his Eskimos, Pilo, Mowat, and he were aboard the launch in which their supplies had already been placed, and were turning out into the big river on a journey of doubtful outcome.

The reports brought in had hardly been exaggerated, and Tigerface and his band of ruffians were no mean foes. They possessed to an extraordinary degree all the cunning, treachery, and savageness of the true Indian, who, once upon the warpath, is the very wolf of human kind. It must not be supposed that these aboriginal remnants of

Indian supremacy were degenerates in war. By no means, as we have pointed out before. They were fair samples of the wild men whom Pontiac, King Philip, and Tecumseh led to battle; and though they were less formidable in numbers and character, their leader—the cruel and crafty Tigerface—was not one whit behind those former leaders. If this chief should overcome and extinguish the Eskimos, he would, as everybody who knew anything of the Indian character surmised, immediately endeavour by force or treachery to gain possession of the fort, and for ever wipe out the trace of the white man's invasion. The immense extent and remoteness of the region, too, gave him assurance of being free from annihilation himself in case of reprisals by the "great white father" to the south. The seriousness of the situation may in some measure account for the apparent cheerfulness of Mr. Paterson's manner, desirous as he was on all occasions of danger of inspiring his people with courage and coolness.

We shall now follow the fortunes of the little craft and crew on their voyage in search of the beleaguered Eskimos.

Chapter XXVI.

THE RESCUE PARTY SETS OUT.

THE little launch was capable of doing six or seven miles an hour under favourable conditions, and was altogether better than the *Sealer* for such an expedition. In a sea or in a long ocean race the *Sealer* would run away from her, but the power of control in a steam craft is the most valuable thing about it on such an occasion as this. Her name was the *Fort Hope*, in honour of the post itself. Every twelve to fifteen hours the stock of wood had to be replenished, and about eleven hours after starting Jack put in, and the crew went ashore for that purpose. There was no scarcity of dry wood, and it did not take many minutes to fill the *Fort Hope's* hold. As night drew near it was evident that there was going to be no moon.

"We can't go on without light, Mowat. We had better lie to at the first favourable opportunity," said Jack.

"Very well, sir. Shall I run her in when I see a good spot?"

"Yes. I will divide the first watch with Pilo to-night, for I am determined never to be caught napping again,"

said Jack, referring to his unfortunate experience with the Nauscopees.

The little port selected by Mowat was not much bigger than a dry-dock of the *Fort Hope's* capacity would have been, and it was sheltered from the north-east or inshore wind, which would prevent her being dashed upon the rocks by any sudden squall from that direction. The crew swung her stern round and lashed her firmly. Mowat was left aboard, while the others made a little encampment on shore for the night. No smoke had emerged from the funnel of the launch for some little time before landing, the fire being kept low; for, as Mowat observed, a column of smoke was the easiest kind of a signal to the Indians. The evening repast consisted of things that could best be eaten cold, the camp-fire being omitted as well. About sundown the wind set in with great force from the north-west, and caused considerable alarm, as it was not without some difficulty that the launch was kept from churning herself to pieces in the heavy swell. Jack changed his mind about taking the watch at this stage of the journey, and placed two Eskimos to do sentinel duty, although it was hardly necessary, and more a matter of discipline and training for the future than for any real fear that any of the marauding red-skins were in the vicinity. Towards morning the wind and sea calmed down somewhat, but not enough to enable them to put out till the sun was high in the heavens. But towards evening it began to blow a furious gale again, and they

were compelled to put in and drag the boat high up on the beach, which fortunately was not too rough for that purpose.

"It seems to me, Pilo, that we are likely to have a rough time of it. If this wind keeps up we shall be greatly delayed, and may not arrive in time to help Ualick," said Jack, as he took a seat on a large stone, somewhat fatigued with his exertions, and looked at the heaving sea and the crests of the waves that ever and anon were picked up by the wind and carried like a blinding snowstorm over sea and land.

"Yee- ar, I tink de wedder is gettin' bat. Hit look off dere as eef de wint was comin' from a long way," replied the swarthy and good-natured French-Canadian.

"It's certainly not what the sailors call a puff or a pocketful," acquiesced Jack.

"No, sir. Hit will give us a bellyful."

"There's no good in putting up a tent here, even if we have to stay a day or two. The wind would blow it down. Is there any shelter behind that rising ground?" asked Jack, pointing to a knoll higher than the rest that looked as if it might give some protection from the wind.

Pilo walked over to it, and, climbing up, looked down on the other side.

"Dere's hardly a camp-ground dere," said Pilo, returning. "De leetle valley at de bottom is like a ditch, and hit is impossible to pitch de tents on de side of de hill."

"That's bad, Pilo. It doesn't look as if we were going to find a camping-place so easily, although the position of

the launch is very satisfactory. It is very fortunate that we found a bit of beach like this. It is the only piece of the kind, too, that I have seen to-day. Come, let us go farther inland and see if we can discover a bush that will do to camp behind."

Jack turned to apprise Mowat of what he intended doing, but the fury of the wind was such that, together with the splashing water, it quite drowned his voice.

"Never mind; they'll know where we've gone to," and Jack and the *voyageur* sauntered off inland.

They had not gone very far till Jack found that it was the roughest piece of country he had ever been in. Not only was there no level piece bigger than a man's hand, but the huge upheavals of granite themselves were rough with boulders and small stones, making the walking exceedingly painful and difficult. After an hour's exploration he came to the conclusion that they had better not try to pitch the tents at all that night. But the wind was not only high; it was cold. To lie on the ground, as one would at midsummer in the temperate zones, without further covering than a blanket of blue, dotted with stars, was not to be thought of. The blankets were accordingly hauled ashore, and carried to the leeward side of the hill. It was a dreary night. There was no satisfaction in smoking, for the currents of air that eddied about continually blew the smoke and the sparks now one way and now another, half blinding the smoker or dissipating the tobacco into thin air without even the odour being left behind. Sleep, too, was out of the question, and the

sentries were called in and told to lie down and take it easy. The roar of the wind was like the bellowing of a thousand bulls, and more than once Jack felt sure that even the granite rock beneath him was shaking. Day dawned, but the wind showed no sign of abating.

"Have you ever known a north-wester keep going long?" asked Jack of Mowat.

"I remember one blowing for the best part of ten days once," replied the half-breed.

"Ten days!" exclaimed Jack in dismay; "impossible! I thought it was only the nor'-easters that did that kind of thing."

"But it was not here, sir—not on this coast. It was down at Bottle Lake, which is over near Davis Inlet."

"Yes," said Jack, scratching his head meditatively; "I only pray it won't keep up like that here. Ualick and every mother's son of them will be in the clasp of death if we don't make better time than this. I suppose it's out of all possibility to reach him overland?"

"It is not possible, sir. The whole country along the shore here is just like this," answered Mowat.

"A nice place to plant a garden in," exclaimed Jack wearily.

It soon became manifest, however, that there was no good in being impatient. The little launch could not venture out till the storm went down, and the most that could be said of it was that the weather looked slightly more favourable than it did. Twice Jack thought that he sighted a sail in the distance, but it proved to be merely

low white clouds coming down to the water. The Eskimos amused themselves looking for shell-fish along the shore. For want of exercise Jack, with Mowat and Pilo, took a walk inland. They scoured the country about, but discovered nothing new. It was the same interminable, uneven, rocky surface, laid over with a mosaic of arctic moss. In a few places there were interesting evidences of the north-east to south-west movement of the glaciers.

"The momentum of a glacier must truly be something wonderful," thought Jack, "to tear a pathway through the granite like this."

"Do you know what did that?" asked Jack of Mowat, pointing to the polished surface of the granite.

"No, sir; I do not. I've often wondered what it was. I've seen it in other places too," replied the half-breed.

"It is due to the movement of the glaciers or gigantic icebergs that in ages long gone ground their way like this all over the continent."

"What was it for, sir?" asked Mowat, in wonderment.

"Well," answered Jack, laughing, "that is more than I can tell. But we know that it is so, because there are glaciers doing the same work over Alaska way and other places at the present time. It makes everything more interesting to a traveller to have a knowledge of the causes of the different peculiar things he sees. What, for example, would we do without the stars? Instead of its being cloudy occasionally, it might, without knowing the stars, just as well be cloudy every night."

"Yes," laughed Pilo. "Eef I did not know dat de

nort' star is in de nort', I would not know where de nort' was, exceptin' some one told me."

"Quite true, Pilo. And when the northern stars are clouded over, how do you know where they are?"

"I don't know, monsieur. I only know de nort' star an' de deeper," replied Pilo reflectively.

"It's this way, isn't it?" explained Jack. "You look all round the heavens at the other stars, and if you don't see the north star you know that it must be behind the clouds, and hence you know where it is just as well as if you saw it."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Pilo, "dat is like de man who said she knew where de leetle dog was because she could not see nor hear it."

"What is that yonder? Isn't it the sun struggling to get through the clouds? Hurrah! It is, as sure as I'm a Dutchman. What do you think, men?—Come, Mowat; you are the weather-oracle."

"I do think it looks like it, sir, and I notice the wind is dropping considerably. If it falls by sundown to-night we'll be able to venture out to-morrow," remarked the half-breed.

"God grant that you are right, Mowat!" ejaculated Jack, "for, if we are to help Ualick, we shall have to be quick about it."

Mowat's prophecy came true, and by sunset the weather had become quiet in comparison with what it had been in the fore part of the day. What little required to be done by way of preparation for the morrow was done, and all

lay down early, so as to rise early, excepting the solitary sentinel. By midnight the wind completely lulled, and Jack listened during the night to the wash upon the shore, which grew less heavy hour by hour. The dawn disclosed a fair sky, and the sea gradually smoothed down. It was certain, too, that none of the enemy was at hand; and, as Jack was longing for a pannikin of hot coffee, a fire was lighted, and each member of the party had a good drink of that refreshing beverage.

Chapter XXVII.

A PERILOUS JOURNEY.

ONCE more the little man-of-war started on her voyage of rescue. She shipped a little water till well out from shore, when she rode the sea like a veteran, and evoked the admiration of her crew for her sea-going qualities. A great eagle was descried soaring majestically overhead. Jack, Mowat, and Pilo all watched it as it poised steadily on its broad pinions.

"It's a golden eagle, isn't it?" said Jack.

"Yes, and a beauty," exclaimed Mowat, with so much enthusiasm that Jack turned from looking at the eagle and looked at him.

"You smile, Mowat," said he; "would you like to point your unerring rifle at that monarch of the air?"

"Yes, sir," replied the half-breed; "I'd like to kill him. What do you think, master?"

Jack paused, and then almost wondering at allowing such a thing, under the circumstances, he granted permission, on condition that Mowat should have one shot only.

"Very well, since you are so particularly anxious, and as

I do not see how the report can reach far inland over the ridge," he added.

Mowat picked up his express, and opening the breech withdrew the cartridge and put in a new one. The eagle was if anything a trifle higher than before, but was still almost directly overhead. Mowat put himself in position and took careful aim. A puff of smoke, and simultaneously the huge bird gave a convulsive flap of his wings and sailed swiftly downward to the sea.

"You have wounded him," cried Jack. "Well done."

"I have killed him, I think, sir," said Mowat modestly, as he threw out the shell.

"I scarcely think so. However, we shall see presently. We will be upon him in a minute.—What think you, Pilo?" said Jack.

"I dunno, monsieur," said Pilo, smiling, "but I never see him miss anyting. He can shoot de eye out of a bird upon de wing."

"Very well! I know he's a good shot, but I doubt very much if the bird that sailed down through the air like that is a dead bird," said Jack, shaking his head doubtingly. "However, all keep an eye, and we shall soon see."

One of the Eskimos uttered an exclamation. He pointed out to starboard, and sure enough there lay, gently heaving upon the waves, the great golden eagle, his head half under water and his broad wings still spread out as before. The course of the launch was changed for the moment, and she drew alongside.

"What a beauty!" exclaimed Jack. "Wait a bit. Watch him. He may be dangerous."

But Mowat had caught the eagle by the neck, and was already hauling him aboard.

"Dead!" said Jack; "dead, sure enough. You broke his breast-bone."

"Yes, sir," replied Mowat with pride. "I knew if it hit him the bullet would finish him," alluding to its explosive nature.

"True! I overlooked that, but it was a good shot to hit him. The launch is not easy to shoot from, and he was very high. That's the only specimen of that particular kind of eagle shot for some time, isn't it? There is none at the fort," said Jack.

"No, sair," answered Pilo, to whom the remark was addressed. "Dere is no golden one at de fort. Dey say tree were shot at de river and at Davis Inlet last year."

"Yes, yes; but I'm referring to this district. Of course, there are a good many to the south, but it is not often the golden eagles are found so far north. What do you intend to do with it, Mowat, if we can keep it till we get back?"

"I will stuff it for Miss Linda," said Mowat bluntly.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Jack loudly, to hide his involuntary blushes.

"But what will you stuff it with? Stones? And by that time it will be past stuffing, I'm thinking."

"I'll draw and stuff when we land, sir," said Mowat.

"What! to-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what with?"

"With the brush of the fir-tree. It will keep till we get back to Fort Hope and for a long time," said the half-breed.

"In that case you may be able to keep it," said Jack. "Anyhow, it will do to frighten Tigerface with."

The latter part of the afternoon was perfect weather. The autumnal yellow of the upper air melted into a resplendent sunset, and the sea took on a purple, then a violet hue. The hills of the sea-coast seemed no longer to be mere ridges of rock, with a winding shore-line fringed with a stunted growth of brush, but were clothed in a garment of sunlit beauty. From far and near came the cry of seagulls as they flashed aloft now and then like balls of snow, when their white plumage caught the direct rays of the declining sun. The air itself too was deliciously soft and agreeable.

"I hope this weather keeps up," remarked Jack. "It will expedite us greatly. But one can never tell twenty-four hours ahead what we'll have at this season of the year. What is that headland yonder?" Jack remained looking at it for some minutes before repeating his question. The Eskimo guide was consulted. It was the headland of Sailor Reef, and was at the land end of a dangerous submarine ledge of rock that jutted out into the sea for half a mile. From this headland to the next was a full day's sail for the launch, and it was therefore lucky for the party that they had come to it within a few hours

of sunset, and would lose not more than that space of time in lying up. At the foot of the cliff and for some distance along the shore-line a pocket or inlay of quartz shone like silver, and when they finally came up to it it was difficult to believe that so dull-looking a crystal was the means of reflecting so much solar splendour.

"Now, Pilo, you take the helm, and I will tell you how to keep her head. It's getting shallow, I suspect, and it won't do to strike even gently on a sharp point. Half-speed, Mowat! Easy! Port, Pilo! Shut off, Mowat! There we are!" exclaimed Jack as the little launch glided easily up on the smooth hard granite. One of the Eskimos leaped ashore and held the line.

"Hold on a minute, sir," cried Mowat as Jack was about to jump ashore himself. "Do you notice the course of the wind?"

"Nor'-nor'-east," said Jack; "so it is. That looks like a break-up of the weather again."

"Do you think she won't bump here if it freshens?" continued the half-breed.

"Well, perhaps she had better be hauled a little farther under the lee of that big piece of rock there.—Shove her off, Nikilick, or whatever your name is, and jump aboard; we'll find a better shelter."

Mowat repeated the order in Eskimo, which Jack could have very well done himself, since he had become fairly proficient in the language, if it had occurred to him at the moment that there was anybody in the world who didn't understand English. The little craft was accordingly

shoved off, and backed out a bit to sea again; and then, her head being brought round towards the big jagged piece of granite, she steamed slowly forward. Jack was looking over the bow down into the water.

"All right!" he cried. "Ease off!"

Instead of the familiar bump, bump, however, the keel grated and scraped before they reached the shore. They were still ten yards from their desired haven.

"Back up!" Jack called out to Mowat. The screw went round and churned up the sea, but the launch remained fast. Jack pulled off his coat and waistcoat, and let himself down over the bow. It was ticklish footing; but the crew went aft, and took some of the freight with them, enabling Jack by a powerful effort to shove her off. He was standing ankle-deep in the cold water, which began to send its chill through his sealskin boots. The launch moved shoreward a foot or two, and then came in nicely, and she was snubbed securely, in a place where she would be wholly out of danger from any likely blow.

"That wind will bring the bergs inshore if it keeps up," remarked Jack.

"Yes, sir. I noticed the field-ice coming in too," replied Mowat.

"What if it should close in before we get back, and we have to strike open water?" inquired Jack, taking a general survey of the sea.

"It would be mighty dangerous, Mr Ralston," observed Pilo, putting in a word with that quiet, good humour of his, as he occasionally did.

"You're bloomin' right, Pilo," laughed Jack. "There would be no joke about that. However, so long as we don't starve to death it doesn't matter; and if the worst came to the worst, we could go ashore and tramp overland. Couldn't we?"

"I don't know about de gittin' ashore so easy. Hit ain't always so easy to get good ice; but we have often been in dem pickles before, and I tink we can get him out again."

Jack laughed, but more at the way the *voyageur* had of expressing the English of getting out of a pickle than at the prospect of trying to get to shore over floating field-ice.

There was some little difficulty in establishing communication with the shore now; and this, with the fact that no fires could be lighted, made the evening drag on uncomfortably. A good supply of wood was picked up, however, that would much more than suffice till they reached Ualick's village, which they expected to do on the following day. The night soon closed in, and was spent in total darkness; and Jack thought it was the gloomiest camp he had ever had anything to do with.

"Come, Pilo," said he, as they sat with their backs against the granite rock smoking, and trying to pass the time cheerfully, but quite unable to see each other, "tell a story of some of your pretty French girls. Mowat and I are anxious to hear about them."

"Would monsieur like a love-story?"

"Certainly, Pilo. That's the thing for me. None of

your dry, humdrum affairs, but one with plenty of spice of romance in it; and remember the girl must be pretty."

"Yes, monsieur;" and Pilo gave one of his quiet, soft, little laughs. "It shall be dat way."

"Well, go on!" exclaimed Jack impatiently.

"I will; but I want to tink which," said Pilo.

"Oh, ho! so you have had a good many flirtations. You're a nice man to go on like that, breaking the pretty ones' hearts," said Jack.

"Ver' well, monsieur, I will tell you of Lizette Beauharnois of St. Boniface. He was a pretty girl" (sometimes Pilo interchanged his masculine and feminine pronouns in this way, but not often). "Dere was tree young mans who demanded her hand for demselves. She was so pretty."

"That's right!" exclaimed Jack, laughing; "I see you are going to make her very pretty."

"Yes, monsieur. She was so pretty dat de priest say it was good for her to be a nun, and get out of de way of de world. She lived wit her moder and fader in Rue Montplaisante. Guilbert Schmidt came by to work tree or four time every day, and sometime he go in not wit knockin', and call out from de hall below, 'Lizette! you are at home?' and den he walk on into de kitchen and see her moder, who do de washing for de church and de seigneur. 'Madame Beauharnois, when do Lizette marry me?' She laugh and say, 'I dunno,' or 'Ask her,' or perhaps, 'Ask Pilo.' At dis he cry, 'Sacré! Pilo!' and turn on his heels, and go on his way to de mill. When

he come back, he look up at de window, and he tink he see her, and trow kiss; but Lizette behind de curtain.

"Den Jean Gagnon come from de shop, and ask Madame Beauharnois if her daughter go to dance wit him at Trois Rivières. Madame say like before, 'Ask Lizette;' and he go to de bottom of de stairs and call, 'Lizette! Lizette!' No réponse. 'Will you come to de dance wit me?—Ah! Madame Beauharnois, Lizette will not answer me. Will you speak?' Madame laugh, and say, 'Ask Pilo.' 'Sacré! Pilo!' he say, and go away wit anger.

"La belle Lizette she go on in dis fashion, and have de two boys crazy. Dey love her all de more.

"Den I come along, and I say, 'Madame Beauharnois, will you please to tell Lizette dat Marie Grinaud go to de dance wit me dis evening, and we have pleasure if she accompany us?'

"Den I hear a little foot upon de landing-place, and a sweet voice say, 'Is dat you, Pilo?' 'Yes, dat me.' 'Bon!' she say. 'Do you come to take me to Madame Roget's?' 'I come wit invitation from Marie Grinaud, who ask you to go wit us,' I répond. 'Non, merci; no, tank you,' she cry. 'I will go wit Jean Gagnon.' 'Eh! bien. He drive? Bon. We drive. We will see you dere,' I say. 'Good-bye. Au revoir!'

"Den I turn to go out de door; but she come to me, and put her pretty hand on my arm, and look up like a dove in my face, and say, 'What! you, Pilo, drive wit Marie Grinaud and let Lizette walk?'

"Den I say, 'What do you wish? What shall I

do?' and she say, 'I must go wit you in de carriage. Marie Grinaud is so boastful.' 'Ver' well. We will call Good-bye,' I say.

"Ver' well, Marie and me we call for Lizette. Jean Gagnon he dere, and Schmidt. Voilà! a pretty box, as de English say. Jean Gagnon he say, 'What for you go wit Marie Grinaud and dat Pilo?' Guilbert Schmidt he say, 'A bas! ce canaille. Parbleu! Monsieur Gagnon, you go trop vite. Tiens là!'

"Den we all go to Madame Roget's in a string. Sometimes we speak. Sometimes we say noting.

"'Who dance wit me first? Eh! bien,' she say, 'de man who run fastest.'

"I run like deer, and get dere first, and trow my arm round de waist. Gagnon and Schmidt dey tink she mean race in de street, and stand still. Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Pilo as his story finished, and then he laughed again, slapping his knee so heartily that Jack was fain to join in and cry, "Good! You French-Canadians are a playful people."

"But what is this? It is snowing!" exclaimed Jack in consternation. "We can't sit like this all night. Hadn't we better put up some sort of a shelter? Ugh!"

The storm burst suddenly, as these northern storms do, and the roaring wind, carrying a load of snow, swept with awe-inspiring power over the face of the water and the bare, ragged ridge behind which the shivering and ill-prepared voyagers lay. The narrow ledge or breakwater of jagged rock, on the leeward side of which the little

launch lay peacefully at rest, giving now and then, perhaps, a slight heave with the change of the tide and the heaving of the sea, was a dangerous place to cross in the darkness and the storm. Two men would be required to haul in the launch and to secure and transport the tent. Mowat and Pilo undertook it, however, and made their way across. Presently they returned with their burden.

"How is she?" Jack inquired.

"The painter is caught, sir," replied the half-breed, breathing heavily after his exertions.

"Is it too short, do you think?"

"Yes, I think so, sir. If she doesn't find an easy place to settle, she may hang or break away."

"Then go at once and find where it is caught, and I will see to the putting up of the tent."

But the putting up of the tent proved the more serious matter of the two, as Jack soon found. Every time the pole was raised, the wind bore it down again, despite the efforts of the two white men and the Eskimos.

"There's one thing about it, anyhow," said Jack; "it's keeping us warm."

"It is dat," laughed Pilo; "but we can hardly keep at dis de whole night."

"Come, boys," cried Jack; "heave-ho! there, once more."

This time the pole went up, and the skins, made secure with heavy stones, defied the blast, although they yielded several times in a very threatening way.

"There!" remarked Jack, "I think she will hold, and we can all lie out of the wind now, which will be a com-

fort. Go, Pilo, and call Mowat. Something may have happened to him. He's been out a long time."

But Pilo met him returning.

"What luck?" asked Jack anxiously.

"She's all right now, sir. The painter had caught under the big rock, although I don't see how it could have happened, unless it heaved a bit first."

"What do you mean? That the big rock rolled a bit and nipped the painter?" exclaimed Jack.

"It would look like it, sir," said Mowat, puzzled.

Jack began to reflect. If the sea, under the influence of tide and wind, really could do this, it was a poor lookout for the launch, and the ultimate safety of his crew and Ualick as well. However, it was necessary to bear up cheerfully, and Jack was not the man to give way in the face of fancied or even real difficulties. The storm continued with increased fury. Three times before day-break the skins were torn from their fastenings, and each time the tent came down. A wilder night could scarcely be imagined. The snow fell in sheets, and though blown off the exposed places, it filled the grooves between the undulations of the ridges. In addition, the weather grew intensely cold, and gave every indication of being the first announcement of the arctic winter.

Once more were Jack and his men glad to see the morning dawn, though it was only to reveal to them the consequences of the storm which had passed in the night. Their first care was to visit the launch; and this they found apparently uninjured, although covered with snow and ice.

"She is low in the water," Jack remarked. "I hope it's only the ice on her sides."

"That's all, sir," said the half-breed. But leaping nimbly in, he was surprised to find ice in the bottom, and looking suspiciously like an inflow from beneath. "She's been aleak, I'm afeared."

"What! aleak?" cried Jack in alarm. "This is bad news. Have her hauled up, and we'll look at her."

The painter was drawn shorewards, and the *Fort Hope* hauled up. Nothing, however, was discovered to confirm Jack's alarm or Mowat's suspicion, and they proceeded to clear her of ice.

Chapter XXVIII.

A HEARTY RECEPTION.

IT was about three o'clock in the afternoon when, on rounding a headland, Jack's Eskimos sighted the fortification of their countrymen on shore. Their joy was indescribable. Succour had come in time, and the Indians would be driven back.

Jack ordered a salute of all the guns aboard to be fired in quick succession, in order to announce their coming with as threatening a sound as possible. These were speedily made ready, and at the signal a *feu de joie* went up from the little craft that would have done credit to marines. Hardly had the echo of the last shot died away, when the distant sound of cheering reached their ears. The Eskimos had caught the sound, and gave a shout in return that must have nearly rent their throats. As the launch drew near it was possible to make out the Eskimo defences quite clearly, and the forms of the defenders climbing up to look over them on the sea side were easily visible. The defences consisted of the ordinary stunted growth that abounds in this region piled up into heaps of brush. Nothing as yet could be seen of the Indians.

As the launch drew in, numbers of the Eskimo garrison

leaped on the brush and waved their arms, at the same time giving vent to loud cries of satisfaction and defiance, and shouting in their own tongue to their comrades aboard the launch, who could scarcely restrain themselves from jumping into the sea and swimming ashore.

When the *Fort Hope* reached land a number of the garrison swarmed over the brush parapet and ran down to greet their allies. Cheer after cheer went up, and Jack's men responded with hearty hurrahs. Jack ordered his Eskimos to make inquiries as to the state of the siege, and when he found that the Indians were evidently preparing to renew the attack, he ordered preparations to be made at once for transferring arms and ammunition into the fort, if such it could be called. It was now about half tide, and he was glad to see that at full tide the launch would lie well under the protection of the defences. Titoo, the messenger to the post, who had gone up to see Ualick at Jack's bidding, returned to say that Ualick had been wounded, and that Nanoak, who had a short time before gone out to ascertain the number and intentions of the Nauscopees and Muskegons, had not yet returned, and it was feared that he had been captured or killed. This was bad news, and Jack hurried his men so that he might speedily get away and take counsel with the Eskimo chief man as to what should be done.

So far, about two feet of snow had fallen, and this had contributed greatly to the comfort of the garrison, who had, in addition to their skin tents, made snow-houses in which all could be accommodated. Not the least timely

part of the help brought from the post was the bale of provisions, consisting of dried meats, coffee, and flour, destined for the imprisoned Eskimos. Although not very large, it supplemented acceptably the seal oil upon which they had for some time been living.

Jack climbed over the brush walls and stood within the enclosure. The Eskimo women and children thronged about him and patted him in their simple, affectionate way, in recognition of his having come to their rescue from their insatiable enemies. But it was no time to stop for pleasantries. They conducted him to the tent in which Ualick lay. The Eskimo greeted him effusively.

"You are kind," said he, "to come to help de poor Eskimo. De red devil are after his scalp."

"How did you come to get wounded, Ualick?" asked Jack solicitously, for the Eskimo was a great favourite with him.

"Indian shoot me dere," said he, pointing to his wounded leg.

He lay on a pile of skins, and seemed fairly comfortable.

"How did it happen?"

"Ualick climb up to put out de fire," said the Eskimo, "when bang, and I nearly fell into de outside. But Tikatoo leap and catch and pull me back. Brave man."

"Is your wound serious, and when did it happen?" continued Jack, with a view to ascertaining what had better be done for it.

"Two sleeps."

"Two days ago?"

The Eskimo nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Hadn't you better let me see it? I might do it some good," said Jack.

The Eskimo sat up and readily removed the scanty covering. It was only a flesh wound, though deep.

"It looks well," said Jack consolingly. "It will be well soon. In the meantime you had better put me in command."

At this the Eskimo put his hand to his mouth and gave a loud, peculiar call. Almost immediately three of his men appeared in response.

"This the captain now," said he, pointing to Jack and speaking in his own tongue, which, however, Jack understood.

The three men doffed their caps and stood waiting for further orders.

"Tell them to remain here until I call Titoo," said Jack, "and then I will go with them."

Jack went to the door of the tent, and espying the messenger in company with his own men, to whom Titoo was pointing out the hill behind which lay the camp of the enemy, he called him over.

They then set out on their tour of inspection—Jack, his men, Titoo, and the three Eskimos, who might properly be called chiefs, although, as before observed, no such rank exists amongst the Eskimos. In the course of his inspection Jack found that the siege had been a more serious thing than he had at first supposed. Many parts of the brush defences had been almost burned away, and several

of the garrison had been killed. The last attack had been repulsed but two days before, and it was evident that the repulse had been successful and effective chiefly through the herculean efforts of Nanoak and Ualick. Another attack without the assistance of these two would have found the garrison at the mercy of the Indians. Truly the rescuing-party had not come a moment too soon.

"Mowat," said Jack, "will you undertake to scout and see how many of those red devils there are? I should like to know something of what we have to expect, and what we should provide against. But beware of old Tigerface. I can't afford to lose you."

The half-breed was delighted at the prospect of an adventure, and hastened to answer in the affirmative.

Chapter XXIX.

THE INDIANS IN COUNCIL.

LET us follow Mowat from the moment he received his instructions. It being almost dark, he decided to wait till daylight was wholly past. Then, notwithstanding the cold, he stripped off everything but a buckskin jerkin, his trousers, his moccasins, and his snowshoes. He did not even wear his usual cap. Nor did he arm himself with anything except a long, sharp knife, which, at close quarters, would be, as he had often found, of good service. Jack had offered him his revolver; but it was a heavy weapon, and the half-breed was a swift runner, and in case of discovery preferred to rely upon his swiftness of foot and the darkness to take him out of danger. When it was quite dark—that is, as dark as the white snow ever permitted it to be—Mowat slipped out of the defences in the rear, and walked along the beach at high-water mark for some distance, until he was opposite a piece of thick brush, which would afford excellent shelter and allow him to look round. He knelt down and put his snowshoes on. With the easy, gliding motion of the expert snowshoer, he shot across the snow and gained the

brush. Sinking down on all fours like a cat, he skirted the trees till he came to the side opposite the Indian camp when he withdrew behind a bush and stood up. The tops of many tents were visible, but beyond this it was plain that nothing of value could be gained by staying in his present position. To go farther south would be to expose himself to the full view of the camp, which, in case of discovery, was certain death or capture. He decided therefore to gain the ridge which ran along the north side of the Indian camp, and protected it like an earthwork from the view of the garrison. Dropping on hands and feet, as before, he reached the ridge in safety, and taking off his snowshoes, wound himself along like a snake till he had reached the summit and could look over. There were twenty lodges in the encampment, and more were being put up, showing plainly that there had been some new arrivals. Two or three fires shed a bright light throughout the encampment, and enabled the half-breed to see everything quite plainly. The Indians were very busy and, contrary to their usual custom, talked incessantly. Mowat, who could speak Indian like a native, grew more and more anxious to hear what was being said. Accordingly he withdrew to where the shadows of the lodge would give him a secure hiding-place, and although the tents hid the Indians themselves from view, he was enabled to hear their voices quite plainly, especially as the night was calm as well as cold. They had, it appeared, determined to await the coming of a band of Nauscopees who were near at hand, after which they anticipated an

easy victory over the garrison. Mowat noticed in the conversation an occasional mention of Nanoak's name, and it made him still more curious to find out what had become of the famous wolf-hunter. The Indians had witnessed the arrival of the launch, but seemed to regard the reinforcement as of small importance. A fiendish chuckle was noticeable throughout their chatter and conversation, as if the delight of slaughtering their enemies was soon to be realized. It was evident also that a determined effort was to be made to exterminate the poor Eskimos, whenever found, in order to secure the hunting-grounds and coast fisheries for themselves.

It must have been well on to midnight when a lot of brush was thrown on one of the fires, in evident preparation for some proceeding of importance. The Indians gradually gathered round the blaze and lit their pipes. In a short time after, the long, stooping form of old Tigerface came towards the circle, which instantly gave its attention to his movements. The half-breed edged in several yards nearer. Old Tigerface bent down and took a pipe from the hand of a warrior, and gave a few puffs at it as a signal of good fellowship. He then began his address.

"You all remember how the Heron's son seized and bound the mighty hunter of wolves and friend of the Eskimos, Nanoak [grunts of satisfaction]. It is he who has so long enabled them to defy the rightful owners of this soil, the warriors of Tigerface, the braves of the Nauyascopee nation, and the Muskegons, who live by the setting sun. To-morrow all this will be avenged [ejaculations of

approval]. The hunter of wolves lies in yonder tent our prisoner. We never forget that it was he who threw our champion and put shame upon us. He says that he is sorry for it, and will be glad to make straight the crooked path he trod that day. There is better game than the Eskimos, he says, and he will help us to get it. What say you? Shall we hear him?"

At the conclusion of this unexpected portion of Tigerface's address there was considerable commotion, some of the Indians being in favour of hearing more, and others apprehensive lest the quarry within the defences should escape them through the proposals or guile of their formidable enemy. However, as Tigerface himself had thought well of the proposals of Nanoak, it was their duty to allow him to proceed, and the old chief stood up once more.

"The hunter of wolves knows how we can become richer than Blackhawk, who had three hundred horses and nine wives. No more, if we do as he says, shall the bad spirit of winter take the food from our children's mouths. We shall have guns to hunt with, and no need to sell the fur that should keep us warm to the Company. What think you, Eagle-feather?"

The latter, as a representative of the young men, was very likely to agree to a proposal which hinted at the restoration of the hunting-grounds to their former Indian possessors, and the banishment of the white man, who was tolerated only because he was a necessity, and had been well able to protect himself. Lately, moreover, a wave of discontent had swept over the roving population

of Indians, and they had become ripe for war, and the slaughter of their enemies, the Eskimos, who were their enemies not from any fault of their own, but simply because the Indian in his wild state must have an enemy of some kind, real or imaginary, and the Eskimos were the most available opponents. Naturally also, in the course of long years of warfare, the Eskimos had been able to deal some effective blows in their own defence, and these furnished the much-desired pretext for revenge. The interest of the dusky audience was now at its height, since the old chief had thrown out hints of an as yet unrevealed plan.

To the invitation of Tigerface the young chief prepared to reply. He arose in a slow and dignified manner, and, looking across the camp-fire towards his interrogator, said,—

"What is it the great chief of the Nauscopees refers to? Where lie the riches of which he speaks?"

"They are in the post at Fort Hope," replied Tigerface, "and that they are there in plenty we all know."

"Who proposes to play the traitor to the paleface and let us enter?"

This distinct reference to Nanoak evoked applause.

"Nanoak!" said Tigerface. "He knows the weak spots of the fort; and the best of their men are now behind the barricade of the Eskimos, helping our enemies."

A murmur of anger ran round the circle at this reference to the action of the Company in interfering with the rights of warfare of the Indians.

"What does the wolf-hunter propose?" again asked Eagle-feather.

"The wolf-hunter proposes that we give him his liberty as before, and he will march with us at once against the fort," answered the old chief.

"He has killed three Muskegons and two warriors of Tigerface, and must die," cried Eagle-feather excitedly.

At this there was a deep murmur of anger in the crowd, and several warriors arose and drew their knives, as if about to visit the tent and dispatch the prisoner. Had the general opinion backed them up, there is no doubt that Nanoak would have at once taken his departure from a scene upon which he was destined to bring so much tribulation. But the prospect of greater gain, and the suggestion of future glory, had had time to work upon the soberer minds, and it was decided to hear what Nanoak had to say. Accordingly he was brought out from the tent, his hands pinioned behind his back, but his feet free.

Three Indians stood beside him, lest he should attempt to escape.

The burly hunter looked at the assembled warriors fearlessly and calmly. He spoke in Nauscopee.

"I have already told Tigerface what I propose," he said quietly.

"Repeat it then," said the old chief.

"I know how to attack the post and take it," said Nanoak. He watched the faces of the Indians for a moment, and then continued: "You all know it is filled with guns and powder and shot, with provisions enough

to last two whole years, with skins and furs that are really the rightful property of the Indian."

A murmur of approval greeted this last remark.

"The best part of the garrison is away," interjected Eagle-feather; "but what is left, together with the accursed Eskimos, could defend it. They suspect us, too, and do not allow more than two within the gate."

"I know that as well and better than you do," Nanoak replied. "Have I not spent days under the roof, and do I not know it well?"

There was a pause, suggestive of something to follow, when Eagle-feather again stood up.

"What price does the hunter of wolves ask for handing over the post into our hands?" he said.

"That the white maiden shall be given to me for my squaw," was the reply.

Scornful cries greeted this confession of the famous hunter that he was the lover of the white maiden. The general derision had a perceptible effect upon the wolf-hunter; but he suppressed his well-known and usually ungovernable pride on this somewhat doubtful occasion. Now it also happened that Eagle-feather himself had seen the beautiful girl, and cherished a violent passion for her. This stipulation of the hunter therefore was decidedly unwelcome. But on consulting again with his warriors Eagle-feather found that they were of opinion that the price was not a high one and had better be accepted.

"Will you hunt again with our enemies, the Eskimos?" he asked.

"Not if you give me the maiden and my liberty to go where I please," said Nanoak haughtily.

"It is well, then," exclaimed Eagle-feather. "We will take the garrison to-night, and put the prisoners to death, so that they may not encumber us."

The half-breed waited not a moment longer, lest he should be discovered, but withdrew as rapidly and silently as possible.

"What have you seen, Mowat?" exclaimed Jack, who was on the watch, as the nimble half-breed dropped from the top of the rear barricade into the enclosure.

"They attack us to-night, sir," replied Mowat, breathing somewhat heavily after his exertions.

"They do, do they? Then we must be prepared for them.—Pilo, examine our defences, and see if plenty of snow is piled against them.—Did you see anything of Nanoak?"

Thereupon the half-breed related to Jack in detail the whole story of the wolf-hunter's treachery. Jack had difficulty in waiting for the conclusion of this tale.

"Go, Mowat," said he, "with all possible dispatch and warn the master himself."

"Do you wish me to go now, sir?"

"At once," cried Jack. "Take what you need and what you like, but be before these inhuman brutes and that white villain in their attack upon the fort. It is more than three hundred miles as the crow flies, it is true, but you are the swiftest-footed of them all, and I expect you to reach the post on the morning of the fifth day. Do

not fail, Mowat, and tell them how we are, and that we are no cowards. But save her, Mowat," he said imploringly, "and if I live your reward shall be sure. We will not be long behind."

The half-breed received the order without parley, and betook himself to his difficult and dangerous task.

Chapter XXX.

A VIGOROUS DEFENCE.

HARDLY was the half-breed clear of the barricade and gliding swiftly along upon the snow-covered ice of the beach when the crack of Pilo's rifle told of the beginning of the Indian attack. The latter had discovered in the dim light an Indian crawling through the snow towards the barricade. But Jack had taken every precaution against surprise; and in addition to rearranging some of the bush, so that it formed a securer network of defence, he had piled the snow thickly against the walls, both on the inside and the out, since nothing stops a bullet better than five or six feet of snow. If they were to successfully defend the little citadel there must be no further diminution of their numbers by bullets. Jack took his station near the centre of the fort, so that he could see signals for assistance from any quarter, and dispatch the required help in the proper direction. Fortunately there was no elevation near at hand and of sufficient height to give the besiegers a commanding position. Had they been able to pour bullets down upon the garrison, it would not have been long before death and destruction would have rendered it an easy prey. Ualick,

though severely wounded, could not be persuaded to lie still. Wrapping his wounded leg up as securely as possible, he astonished Jack by appearing upon the scene and asking to be placed upon the walls. Seeing that he was able to overcome the pain of his wound so far as to be of some service, Jack readily granted his request, and placed the herculean Eskimo at the south-west corner. This had hardly been carried out when vigorous signals from Titoo called Jack's attention to Pilo's corner. Running thither, he found that a number of Nauscopees were crawling along the edge of the ravine. What was to be done? To fire now might merely be a waste of ammunition and a means of encouragement to the Indians, who, if they found the fusillade harmless, might transfer their base of attack to the ravine, and this would be a calamity, since it would concentrate the attack on one point, whilst the rest must still be defended in case of surprise.

"Wait till the head of the file appears at this end, Pilo," said Jack calmly, "I then fire. Titoo and the others will fire too, and I will keep myself in reserve."

In a moment the leading Indian appeared, not more than twenty yards from Pilo's corner. Pilo fired. The Indian threw up his arms and fell. The next one came into view almost at the same time, and a bullet from Titoo wounded him. Instead of being intimidated by this proof of good shooting, however, as Jack had expected, the others closed up, and, giving their frightful war-whoop, sprang forward towards the wall. A bullet whistled past Jack's head. They had begun firing as they ran. Titoo

gave a short, shrill cry of pain. He had received a bullet in the shoulder. Instantly Jack stooped down and called up his reserves, which consisted of seven Eskimos armed with the rifles brought in the launch. Pilo and the others looked apprehensively at their commander, but with admirable coolness he gave orders not to fire till the heads of the assailants appeared over the wall. "Then don't miss," said he, "if you have any regard for your wives and children."

The Indians could be heard clambering up. As their tufted heads appeared, the Eskimos fired. All the assailants fell back but one, and he succeeded in getting over the top of the wooden parapet before those within were aware of it. But Ualick, who had been unable to restrain himself longer, arrived on the scene at this juncture, and, clubbing his rifle, dealt the brave a frightful blow, killing him outright. This incident had for the moment distracted the attention of the defenders from those who had fallen back at the first volley, and on looking for them the survivors were descried dragging two wounded companions over the brow of the ridge, the dead being left behind at the bottom of the wall outside. Pilo fired at them, but did no damage, and was answered by a yell of defiance from the Indians.

While this attack was being successfully repulsed, five Nauscopees had nearly succeeded in effecting an entrance at the rear, but they retreated on hearing the cries of the others, and upon seeing that the garrison was fully prepared to receive them. They darted back with great

swiftness, and had almost gained cover when Jack's rifle "spoke," and one of their number fell. The Eskimos were beside themselves with joy at their success. The comparatively small number of the attacking party, notwithstanding the recent reinforcements, was due to the unbridled eagerness of a few of the young bloods, who could not be restrained. This was learned afterwards, and probably accounted for the failure of the assault.

Day slowly dawned upon the white landscape; and, notwithstanding the vigorous nature of the attack, Jack could with difficulty believe that he and his little band of Eskimos had been so near death. He set to work immediately to strengthen the defences.

The weather was becoming intensely cold; and the blocks of floating ice, as they came insinore with the tide or wind, froze solidly to the ice already formed along the shore-line. The little launch was now some distance from the water-line, and it was a matter of much concern to Jack how he would get her into the water again without doing her damage, by reason of the roughness of the ice. This, added to his almost frantic anxiety to get away to the assistance of the people at the post, caused him much worry and unhappiness. At last he could bear the suspense no longer.

"Pilo, I want you to scout, and see what those miserable devils over the hill are doing, for we must get away from here as soon as possible." This remark was the outcome of his determination to leave the Eskimos to their fate if necessary, rather than imperil one hair of Linda Paterson's

head. "The plan I have adopted," he continued, "is that we will cover your retreat, in case you are discovered and followed up."

"Yes, monsieur," said Pilo, smiling; "but don't hit me wit de bullet."

The Frenchman's pleasantry was not wasted; nor was it evidently intended to be merely "one of his leetle joke," for a promiscuous gathering of Eskimos would furnish a doubtful protection, to say the least of it.

"All right, Pilo; we shall see to that," said Jack. "Get on your way as soon as possible. Which way will you go?"

"Straight at eet, monsieur," replied the *voyageur*, pointing to the top of the ridge which ran parallel to the fortifications and rose less than two hundred yards before him.

Those Eskimos who were not chosen to shoot over Pilo, in case of pursuit, were already feasting with their wives and little ones on seal oil, deer-meat, and coffee, the last two ingredients of the feast having been, as we have said, brought in the launch. A merrier party could not have been found anywhere, or one more free from care. It seemed as if they had gathered together by way of a picnic, instead of being huddled together to protect themselves against their dreaded enemies, the Indians. But so it was, and one cannot help feeling grateful to the Maker of all things that He has made these dwellers amidst the icebergs and the snow-drifts so capable of being contented and happy. Ualick's leg bothered him a good deal, and his son had taken his place amongst the Eskimos as their

leader for the time being, although not in the councils of the white men, who would have been sadly at fault had they been compelled to do without the shrewd advice of the powerful Eskimo.

Pilo bravely betook himself to his task, and slipped down the face of the snow-covered wall on the left, unarmed except for the knife in his belt. He proceeded cautiously, and with his eyes fixed upon the top of the ridge, ready to descry the first hostile head that might appear over the crest. But as he crawled forward, no sign of the enemy was forthcoming. He grew bolder as he advanced, and soon reached the top. Removing his cap, he leaned forward as low as possible, and like a pointing dog peered over the hilltop. The sight that greeted his eyes astonished him. The Indians had already departed on their way to the south-west. Dropping back, he hurried to the wall, and climbing up, was met at the top by Jack.

"What news, Pilo?" cried Jack excitedly.

"None, monsieur. Dey are going, gone," answered the *voyageur*, shaking his curly head.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Jack. "We must prepare to depart at once, and yet we must give no sign, lest these cunning devils return. Do you think that you and I could handle the launch alone?"

"Yes, monsieur. It ees not difficult."

Jack, however, was rightly dubious of this optimistic view of things, although it would undoubtedly be best to leave the Eskimos brought from the village at the post, well-armed as they were, as a reinforcement for the garrison, till

such time as the threatening conduct of their enemies assumed a more peaceful character, when it would be easy for them to make their way overland to the post again. Accordingly he called Ualick to one side and unfolded his plan. The latter was highly pleased at the generous consideration of his white friend, and spoke to the friendly Eskimos themselves about it. At first they were inclined to murmur at being separated from their kith and kin, especially as the Indians might attack them too; but Jack assured them that upon Mowat's arrival they would all be called within the palisade of the fort, and that they would be well able there to protect themselves. Though it was at the sacrifice of their own feelings and anxieties, they yielded good-naturedly, and prepared to help with the launching of the little boat.

It was no easy task to get the launch fairly set in the water without injury. The united exertions of fifteen men, under Jack's direction, at length overcame all difficulties, and the little bark was let down safely into the sea. Jack well knew that this voyage would be more difficult and more dangerous than the last. The weather was more tempestuous, and the seas were running high. There was no longer, either, any certainty of getting landing-places for shelter or for rest. Fuel, too, would have to be brought across the ice. The air was biting. The severe weather of the last few days had brought down all the fierceness and rigour of winter cold.

An ample supply of wood was soon put aboard, which filled the space left vacant by those left behind; and.

assuring himself that all was well, Jack took leave of the Eskimos, and with Pilo climbed in and proceeded to get up steam. The Eskimos hung about, however, during this process, in spite of Jack's appeal that they should run no risks but keep their station within the defences till all possibility of danger was past. At last the sound of escaping steam gave warning that all was ready, and after a most affectionate leave-taking on the part of the Eskimos, and especially of Ualick, who limped about in spite of his wound, the little launch backed out and started away with all speed for Fort Hope.

Chapter XXXI.

A BEARER OF EVIL TIDINGS.

AFTER the death of her mother, Linda's life was greatly changed. As can easily be imagined, she missed more and more the company of those of her own age and sex. There are a thousand little diversions most entertaining to girlhood which are lost for want of companionship. It is true that she was happy and had not the least idea of repining, but there is a spontaneous vivacity in the youth of a woman which does not find vent in the society of men. To make up for this, her father had devised everything possible to afford her amusement and instruction. He was a man of more than ordinary education, and taught her literature and logic, besides storing her mind with all that valuable furniture which distinguishes the full mind-house from the vacant one. She, also, had not merely a casual desire to acquire a smattering of these things, for she pursued them with considerable determination. To some extent she had learned to love reading for its own sake, and she saw what a priceless boon a taste for reading and reflection is, which, as her father assured her, if once acquired is never lost. The good example of her mother she had not failed to profit

by, and as there were no giddy, senseless creatures fond of show and vanity in the neighbourhood, excepting amongst the Indians and the Eskimos, there was no danger of her naturally gay and lively disposition being spoiled by excess of folly. The danger, if any, lay in the too great repression of her light-heartedness, and this both her father and her mother had always been most careful to avoid.

"Linda," said her father, one bright morning, "why do you not take advantage of the sunlight for beginning your tobogganing?"

"Who'll go with me? Will you go, daddy?" asked the gentle girl archly, in one of those moods of ennui when one wants to do something and does not know what it is.

"Daddy's very sorry, my love, but he has work to do," replied her father; "but Emack's in the village again, and then Morrison has returned, for I saw him go past the window not a moment ago."

Yes, papa; but couldn't we find a girl in the village, too? You remember how nice Tikalooka was."

"Decidedly; why not?" said her father. "Slip on your jacket and see if Nooka is there, and take Dandy with you. It will do you ever so much good, and you will have such an appetite."

"There's Morrison now.—Morrison!" she cried, and tapping at the window to arrest his attention, she ran to the door, "could you go with me to the Peak tobogganing, do you think?"

"Yes, miss, if the master gives me leave," and the

Orkneyman smiled with pleasure, for the young girl was a great favourite.

"Oh, I will see to that," she cried; and returning in a trice she announced that not only was he to have leave to go, but that the entire staff was at her disposal. "What think you of that?" she cried triumphantly. "Now we must get Nooka or one of her sisters."

Suiting the action to the word, Linda and her guardian went down to the village of the Eskimos, and hunted up the abode of Nooka, whom they found at home. The broad-faced, smiling Eskimo maiden laughed gaily at the prospect of taking part in a morning's amusement with the young mistress, and without even waiting to put on her head-gear declared herself ready to go. As for Emack, it was ascertained that he was not in the village, having gone off again in quest of seals. Emack was no longer merely the *attaché* of Jack Ralston or of any prospecting hunter, but had long since graduated as a full-blown seal-hunter and fisherman, and it was said that he was soon to take unto himself a daughter of no other than our valiant friend Ualick. Davis was idle, and though he was very careful and very respectful, he was so very stupid that Linda determined to augment the party by adding Sambo, if possible. Though contrary to all rules, for Sambo was on the indoor staff only, he was allowed to go on this occasion, and proved himself worthy of the promotion.

The Peak was an excellent place for the enjoyment of the national pastime of tobogganing, affording a clear run of about six hundred yards, with the usual jump and

bound in the air at the finish. The course was too precipitous, except when there was a great depth of snow; but since the late snowstorms there was not less than four feet on the level. Having to wear snowshoes added to the exercise if not to the enjoyment of the party. Sambo had never really learned the art of snowshoeing, and, as the golfer would say, he "foozled" his steps. It was therefore extremely amusing to see his attempts at walking. He seemed to think it necessary to lift his foot high in the air at each step, which often caused the heel of the shoe to remain stuck in the snow in a most aggravating way. Though an ominous cloudiness overcast the sky occasionally, the weather remained fair, and left the tobogganists in full enjoyment of a lovely morning. Although Sambo was supposed to help Morrison in hauling the toboggans up the hillside, it was as much as he could do to haul himself up. "Golly! Mith Linda, dose snowshoes is tangly," he exclaimed, on emerging from the snow into which he had stumbled and gone head first.

"You're a white man now," laughed Linda, "and see that you remain one."

It was all very enjoyable, and they were loath to leave it. The rush from the hilltop into the lowland was like the rush of an express train, only much faster, and the snow flew in wreaths on each side, veiling the toboggans in the purest white.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Linda at last, as her heightened colour and panting breath proclaimed the excitement and fatigue of the exercise; "I shall have to stop. Sambo,

you had better hurry on to the fort, or else I shall be so hungry by the time you get dinner that I shall not know what to do."

Without a word Sambo started off in obedience to the request, falling face downwards, however, at about every dozen steps; but perseverance is always successful, and Linda had the satisfaction of seeing him at last within reach of his quarters. As she looked laughingly at the disappearing figure of the negro, she was startled at seeing what appeared to be Mowat, who had lately gone with Jack Ralston to the rescue of the Eskimos.

"Is not that Mowat?" she exclaimed, calling to Morrison.

"It is, miss. There is something strange here. He is very ragged and tired; and where did he come from?"

They watched him for a moment as he passed behind the little piece of wood and emerged on the other side, continuing on his way to the fort.

"Come along, Nooka! I am going to the fort to see what news Mowat brings," and Linda ran eagerly away over the snow. As she neared the stockade the loud ringing of the bell of the fort smote ominously upon her ear. She was terrified at the unusual sound.

"What is it, Davis? What has happened? What has brought Mowat back?" she asked anxiously of the blacksmith, who was standing near the door as she entered.

"The master is with him now in the office. It's something about Indians, miss," said the blacksmith, whose curiosity had been roused to the highest pitch by the bell-ringing and the arrival of Mowat.

"Will they kill us, Davis?" exclaimed Linda.

"I hope not, miss; but the master ordered the bell to be rung to call in the Huskies."

The office door opened and Mr. Paterson joined his daughter.

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Paterson, "the Eskimos will all be within the stockade to-night."

"Dear papa," cried Linda, "what did Mowat say? Do tell me all about it. Where is Jack? Why did Mowat come across country?"

Her father smiled encouragingly.

"You ask a good many questions at once, my dear; but sit down and don't be alarmed, and I will tell you all about it," said he. Whereupon he related to his daughter most of the facts and circumstances with which the reader is already familiar.

"Now there is no use, my dear child, of feeling alarmed; and do not show any excitement in the presence of the Eskimos, or, in fact, of anybody, since it only tends to throw all my plans for our protection into confusion. The Indians are not in large numbers, and there is dissension amongst them as it is," said he.

Mr. Paterson thought it prudent to conceal from his daughter the part being played by Nanoak, whose action, he was convinced, had been prompted by a desire to save his own life, and not by any intention of handing the fort and its inmates to the Indians for plunder and murder. Of the bargain respecting Linda he had not been told.

The bell was rung only in case of some important an-

nouncement, such as the sighting of the ship or the distribution of food in times of scarcity. The Eskimos were at a loss therefore to know why it was being rung now, and came running in more out of curiosity than fear. When they were gathered in sufficient number Mr. Paterson went out and spoke to them, explaining the reason for the ringing, and offering them, as had been done on two previous occasions, the protection of the fort. The poor creatures became greatly excited, notwithstanding Mr. Paterson's efforts to quiet them, and hastened off to bring their children and belongings within the stockade as quickly as possible. Several of the Eskimo hunters were away fishing or trapping, and their wives set up a loud lamentation. Morrison, M'Diarmid, and Davis, under the superintendence of the second officer, Mr. Coleridge, were dispatched to the natives' assistance; and in the course of three hours the entire population then at the village, their tents, pelts, fur, comatics, dogs, and weapons of the chase and of war, were all within the stockade in a confused mass. The gates were shut and the big crossbars let down, and sentries were placed at the requisite points, while two of the most sagacious of the young Eskimos were sent out as scouts. Morrison and a young Eskimo were then dispatched with dog-teams to the mouth of the river to await the arrival of the launch at the edge of the ice. As for Mowat, who had risen from his slumber refreshed and ready for the fray, Mr. Paterson wisely decided to keep him constantly at his side to advise him, since not only was he a brave, trusty, and sagacious man, but he

had also seen the Indians themselves, and had overheard their plans and intentions.

While Linda and Nooka, who henceforth became Linda's constant companion, discussed the likelihood of Jack's getting safely back to Fort Hope, and whether, if he did reach the mouth of the river now blocked up with ice, he would fall into the hands of the Indians or would be able to escape from them, Mr. Paterson, Mr. Coleridge, and the entire staff were busy putting the disordered mass of Eskimos and their belongings into some sort of shape for defence and usefulness. Davis, on account of his experience as a blacksmith and gunsmith, was deputed to examine all weapons, and, if necessary, to put them in shape. Since there was not room enough in the houses for all the Eskimos, tents were put up in the most sheltered places. The supply of water for the fort was furnished by the large stream that ran through the courtyard. This was ample if not interfered with; but as it took its rise two miles inland, deprivation was possible. Everything that so experienced a man as Mr. Paterson considered necessary for a successful resistance was looked to.

Chapter XXXII.

PREPARATIONS AT THE FORT.

IT will be remembered that the post proper consisted of a space of about three acres, enclosed by a stockade, broken at the corners by the houses of the officers and of the men, and at intervals by storehouses and repair-shops. To defend this large enclosure successfully would be as much as the force under Mr. Paterson could accomplish, if favoured by fortune ; but if fortune, as it is called, went against them, as might easily happen with so cunning a foe, then indeed would the prospect be alarming. The weak spots in the stockade were seen to, and they were many. Prolonged peace had caused a certain neglect of the stockade as a means of defence. Mr. Paterson did not feel afraid, however, as he had an abiding contempt for the fighting abilities of the dregs of the Indian race, as he was wont to call them. Nevertheless, there were a few specimens left of the red man proper, and these were to be feared by any man. Add to this the frightful consequence of a successful raid on the fort, and of the unlicensed barbarities of a pack of demons, and it will be found that the master of the post did well to wish for the speedy return of the rescuing party.

It was with no little joy, therefore, that on the morning of the day after this reflection Mr. Paterson sighted the dog-teams in the distance. They shot over the ice with the speed of a railway train, and in a short space of time watchers were able to distinguish the characteristic dress of each of the well-known figures. To Mr. Paterson's questioning look as they drew up before the door Jack hastened to reply.

"I thought it better to leave my Eskimos, sir, as we could not be sure that the Indians would not return. It was a matter of doubt whether they would return and attempt to finish off the garrison or continue on towards the fort."

"You did right, Jack, and I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you safe and sound. Two such brave men as you and Pilo are a welcome addition to any party."

Pilo touched his cap and smiled gratefully at the compliment, while Jack, in response to a gesture of Mr. Paterson, entered his quarters.

"Now, Jack," said he, as he closed the door after having directed the men as to certain duties he wished them to perform, "we must go and see Linda. She is anxious to know what you have done since you went away, and will be glad to see you safe and sound. Never mind cleaning up just yet. Go into my room and give your hair a little straightening, if you like; but come into the sitting-room, so that we may talk this wretched affair over."

Jack was positively black with dirt, but he was pleased at having the opportunity of seeing Linda, though, as he

said, "in clothes that an Indian would not be proud of." However, he was grateful for the small favour of being allowed to brush his hair, and with an apologetic look for his unkempt appearance he took his way into the sitting-room.

"O Jack!" exclaimed Linda joyously, rising and going forward to meet him with extended hand. "Papa and I are both so glad to see you. We do not relish being left at the mercy of those miserable Indians. We have been so curious to find out how this mutiny began."

"You have heard, of course, from Mowat," said Jack, taking the proffered chair, "what he heard in the Indians' camp. The idea originated with Nanoak."

"The treacherous fellow!" cried Linda, with an involuntary shudder. "But I suppose it was to save his own life."

"Ah! my dear," broke in Mr. Paterson, "no true man would have doomed you to the terrible risk, even for the sake of his own life."

"But you remember, papa," continued the young girl, "that the last time he was here he was extremely annoyed at not being allowed to enter for the white men's prize."

"What do you think of Linda's idea?" asked Mr. Paterson, turning again to Jack.

"I remember the incident, sir, and I remember thinking at the time that there might be trouble over it some day, but it is so long gone that I hoped he might have forgotten it. It may be a good deal as Linda says. What does Mowat think?"

"I didn't ask him about that. It did not occur to me. Call him, Jack, like a good fellow. He is likely in the quad."

Jack departed to do his master's bidding, and met Mowat at the door, where he was already lingering in the hope of seeing his young friend. Their meeting was very cordial, and as Jack felt the warm, earnest pressure of the half-breed's hand, and saw the happy expression of his face at meeting him again, the blessing of true friendship came before him in all its charm and strength. Mowat returned to the room with Jack, and Linda, with whom he was a great favourite, ran forward and greeted him with so warm a welcome that the tall, graceful form of the half-breed for the moment assumed an awkward pose, and the swarthy face was deepened in hue with the colour of the blood mounting to his cheeks.

"Mr. Ralston," Mr. Paterson began, "is somewhat of opinion that Nanoak may be gratifying a feeling of revenge for being debarred from the white men's match, which you remember, Mowat. Do you think that, or was it the only way he had of saving his life."

Mowat twirled his cap uneasily for a few moments, looked at Jack, and then answered.

"I think he was glad of the chance," said Mowat tersely; but he kept looking down in a bashful, embarrassed way at the floor that caused Mr. Paterson to say,—

"Never mind being bashful, Mowat. It is no time to feel embarrassed. We must find out all we can, so that

we may be on our guard against everything and anything that may turn up."

Still the half-breed kept twirling his cap and gradually getting redder and more embarrassed than ever. At last he jumped up so suddenly as to startle them, and said, "I think I could tell you, sir, more in the yard than I can now."

Mr. Paterson saw at once what was the matter, and, beckoning to the half-breed, went out. When they had reached the courtyard, he turned to Mowat.

"What did you mean?"

"Nanook was—fond of Miss Linda!" exclaimed the half-breed, the words almost tearing themselves free from his tightly-compressed lips. It was evident that nothing but the command of the master would ever have drawn this statement from him.

"But," cried Mr. Paterson in astonishment, "why should he wish to hand us over to the Indians?"

"Because he hates us—you all—now," said Mowat, correcting himself for his familiarity in ranking himself along with the master.

"Then we may expect trouble from him?" said Mr. Paterson inquiringly, at a loss even yet to understand the conduct of the apostate white man.

Mr. Paterson was practical, but not suspicious, and the subtle play of men's passions might go on before him every day without his being sensible of their existence. In remote and isolated regions feuds and evil passions seem to thrive more than in thickly-peopled districts, due,

no doubt, to the greater opportunity and more defenceless condition on the one hand, and to greater mutual support on the other.

Mr. Paterson returned to the sitting-room in no happy frame of mind. An ill-defined dread was creeping over him, for Nanoak was a man more to be dreaded than a hundred Indians.

Thinking that her father might be some time in conversation, Linda asked Jack to give her an account of his trip and the dangers that befell him. This narrative was interrupted by Mr. Paterson's return; but as he gave no sign of divulging what he had heard, Jack was importuned to continue.

"And you were nearly lost!" exclaimed Linda in horror, as he told of one of their narrow escapes from being crushed by the ice.

Jack blushed.

"Yes, Linda; and had it not been for the bravery and promptness of Pilo, there is no doubt that we should soon have been struggling in the water, and that means a good deal," said Jack gravely. "It was this way," he continued. "The ice had been drifting in for hours, piling up and crashing against the shore-ice, which is now a long way out. Pilo and I had comforted ourselves with the idea that in case of necessity we could land on the shore-ice, but we soon saw what a mistake we had made. The farther we got on our voyage the wider grew the rim of floating ice, so that it was impossible to get a firm footing, except at long intervals. We hardly slept any

at all. We had to watch, and besides we were anxious to get back. We dodged the icefloes as we went along, and the little lantern at the masthead showed the white ice clearly. It was about midnight, and we were getting anxious. Pilo was at the wheel, when suddenly he called out for me to go at half-steam. I did so and went forward. The ice was getting very thick. I saw it was critical.

"'De ice is gettin' awful tik, Mr. Ralston,' said Pilo.

"'Can't we hold our course till morning? We shall then be within reach of the mouth of the river,' I asked.

"'Don' know. I tink we better put to sea,' he replied.

"At this moment a huge icefloe was about to close in against the shore-ice, and to engulf us in, as it were, the jaws of a crocodile, the farther end of it being already joined. It was swinging round rapidly. I thought the launch was doomed. I ran back and reversed the engine. She stood still and then began to pull back. Should we escape it? Suddenly I saw Pilo seize the painter and clear the bow at a jump. I ran forward. He was already on the floating ice, pushing the launch away from it. She kept clear till the ice swung round and passed the bow. We were safe. Pilo gave a bound, caught the gunwale, and climbed aboard.

"'Well done, Pilo!' I cried. 'I shall report you for promotion for this.' And I shook him heartily by the hand. We did not lose much time over congratulations, however, for we were too anxious for that, and we were

both very glad when daylight came. The little launch is a brick. She is better than an ocean-steamer. At noon we were in the cove, and had her snubbed behind Pigeon-rock. If we don't get her out she'll freeze in, and won't come to much harm."

Jack stopped.

"Well, what then?" asked Linda eagerly.

"The next thing was the cog," Jack replied.

"Weren't you afraid that they wouldn't be sent for you?"

"How absurd! Linda," protested her father, putting his hand gently on the arm that encircled his in its embrace, and looking amusedly at her.

"I thought Mr. Paterson would send for us, if Mowat reached the post. If he didn't, then we should have to walk, and that didn't matter," Jack replied.

"Not to a stalwart young giant like you, anyhow," exclaimed Mr. Paterson, reaching forward and giving him a slap on the back. "And so Pilo saved the launch, did he? I shall give him ten shillings a month more pay. That's what I shall do.—How will that answer, my dear?"

"That will be nice for dear Pilo," said Linda, smiling.

But Mr. Paterson wished to have a word with Jack in private.

"What think you of this business, Jack?" inquired he earnestly, as they withdrew into Mr. Paterson's office.

"It is more serious than anything yet, sir. Nanoak is at the head, and Tigerface cannot hold back Eagle-feather and the young warriors," replied Jack, "even if he wants to."

"Do you think that Nanoak wishes to carry off my child?" asked Mr. Paterson bluntly.

If the dreadful suggestion which Mowat had just made had any foundation in fact, the blaze of rage that flamed in Jack's face at the question must have assured Mr. Paterson that his daughter would not lack a protector.

The careless feeling entertained by Mr. Paterson with regard to the threatened invasion of a band of Nauscopees and Muskegons, and the natural contempt of the white man, had now given way to a feeling of intense anxiety. The thought of Linda's possible danger roused a strength of determination in Mr. Paterson which a regard for his own life would never have aroused. Mowat, as we have seen, with the quick instinct of the Indian part of his nature, had perceived the double motive of the infernal cunning of Nanoak; and Jack, with all the impetuosity of youth, realizing at once the likelihood of Nanoak's desire for revenge and of his admiration for Linda, resolved to perish rather than allow one of the band to get within the stockade.

Sentinels were placed with great care and vigilance. With the exception of Mr. Paterson, the white men all took their turns at duty. Mr. Paterson was of course in command. Coleridge ought to have been second in command, and would have been so had it not been for the fact that he knew nothing of handling a gun, much less of leading an attack against Indians or of resisting them. He was so altogether unfitted for such a position, under such circumstances, that he evidently did not expect it.

Jack therefore was entrusted with this most important position, and it was well for the post and its people that it was so.

"I wish you to take practical command," said Mr. Paterson, conferring with him upon the appointment; "and when it is necessary to act without taking time to consult me, you may do so, although, of course, otherwise I prefer to weigh everything carefully before acting."

As Jack acquiesced in Mr. Paterson's arrangements he was much struck with his changed appearance. Since his wife's death Mr. Paterson's health had declined considerably, and the pale face, the long lines down the sides of the nose and mouth, and the deep wrinkles about the eyes and across the forehead, spoke volumes. It added too, to the sense of responsibility which Jack felt. In case of emergency it would not be possible for Mr. Paterson to stand the strain of much fatigue, and no one else had the interest, one might almost say the sacred interest, that he himself had in the beautiful orphaned girl.

The plan adopted was a semi-military one, possessing the military feature of system and regularity and the Indian feature of individual action and promptitude. Mr. Paterson was, as usual, in his own house, which was headquarters. Here also was Jack, who was thus enabled to see or be within call of what was going on at any part of the wooden wall surrounding the courtyard. Three of the Eskimo hunters, not including Emack, who had not yet returned, were the reserve to be thrown at any desired moment upon the point needing them. Mowat was in

command of the corner farthest removed from headquarters, and upon which the advancing Indians would probably make their chief attack, knowing, as Nancoak did, and others too, for that matter, that it was the weakest portion of the enclosure's defences. Pilo, as nearly equal in knowledge of the ways of the Indian, was in command of the next corner. Morrison and M'Diarmid were employed in strengthening the stockade, but in case of attack they were to assist at the required point with the reserve.

Two Eskimos returned that morning, but coming from the opposite direction, had seen no trace of the Indians. However, they were a welcome addition to the garrison, as they were stout, strong men, and excellent shots. One was sent to the south-east corner, and the other to the north-west corner, where the little force needed most strengthening. The weather was very cold and lowering, as if a big storm might be expected. The garrison was strung up to a high pitch of expectation and excitement.

Just about three o'clock, as the shades of evening had begun to gather, a figure on snowshoes was descried coming hurriedly from the north-east towards that point where Mowat was stationed. As he drew nearer it was seen that it was Emack. He was travelling rapidly. As he came round the bend of the ridge, he turned to go down to the village. Mowat hailed him; but the Eskimo merely looked round, and then hurried on towards the village. Mowat dispatched a young Eskimo to overtake him, or rather to intercept him, which he succeeded in doing as Emack was entering the village. A little knot of

his people gathered at the gate to welcome him as he came in; but as Jack had sent for him, he had no time to stop, except to assure himself that his mother was safe in the fort.

"What did you see, Emack?" asked Jack, as the stalwart young Eskimo stood before him, cap in hand.

"I see Nauscopees and Muskegons on de warpat," exclaimed Emack excitedly.

"How near were you to them?"

"One two mile."

"But," remonstrated Jack, "you couldn't get a very good view of them at that distance, Emack."

"Yes. Indians dance de scalp-dance round de fire. Emack hurry to de village to save his people."

"How far are they away?"

"Twelve," said Emack.

"Twelve leagues?"

"Yes."

"Well then, we may expect them this evening," said Jack, and a shadow of renewed anxiety flitted across his face. "All right, Emack. You get ready, and we will place you along with Mowat at the wall."

Emack nodded his head and went away. Mr. Paterson and Jack had been in conversation for some time, when a messenger came in from the half-breed to say that Indians were down at the village. Upon hearing this, both went out, and going up into the storehouse attic had a good view. It was now dark, but forms could be distinctly seen moving about, against the white background of snow. Then they disappeared. No doubt the deserted

village was a surprise to the Indians, as they had made good time, and might reasonably have expected to see what was now a vacant spot thronged with Eskimos—an easy and unsuspecting prey. It was a matter of doubt with Mr. Paterson and Jack as to whether it would be better to keep the lights burning, as a notice to the marauders that the post was prepared, or to put them out altogether, in hope that the first attack would, in consequence, be repelled with greater certainty.

"Now, Jack, you know," said Mr. Paterson, "I am anxious to have your candid opinion in this matter. What is your plan of resistance?"

Jack thought for a moment in order to make his plan clear in his own mind.

"I think, sir, from what I know of the Nauscopees, that they dread an uncertainty or a mystery more than anything else. Consequently, I should advocate, if you will not think me too bold in making answer, Mr. Paterson, that all the lights be put out. We can see the Indians when they come near better without them, for one thing; and then they must know where the Eskimo village has gone to, and they will therefore know that we know all about their intentions."

"Well reasoned out, Jack!" exclaimed Mr. Paterson with satisfaction. "I partly agree with you, but I think the Indians will hesitate to attack a fort well lighted and evidently prepared."

"Yes, sir," assented Jack; "but, from what Mowat heard, Nanoak is advising them, and he is very cunning.

Lights mark the whereabouts of the rooms, and give chances for shooting."

"Very well," said Mr. Paterson, after thinking the matter over carefully; "direct that all the lights be extinguished."

This precaution was accordingly adopted. About an hour after the first figures were seen at the village, two forms were descried crawling towards Mowat's corner from the eastern side, taking advantage of the rising ground. Evidently concluding, from the universal darkness in and about the fort, that all were asleep, they stood up and advanced in Indian file, and with the smooth, rapid, gliding gait peculiar to their race. Mr. Paterson and Jack, who had been warned of their approach, were in the upper story of the storehouse on the left. They could see all that was going on through a window that overlooked the approach to the entrance. It was a moment of some excitement and anxiety to both men when the Indians stopped at the gate, and failing to find it open, tried to peer through the numerous cracks in the weather-beaten and loosely-constructed barrier. Finding the gate locked, they proceeded along the palisade till they came to the entrance to the timber-house. This was the strongest part of the stockade; but not having been constructed with a view to secrecy, it afforded, like many other parts of the fort, an excellent opportunity for an inspection of the interior. Having surveyed through this the scene before them in the half-light long enough to see what had become of the Eskimos and their belongings, they

moved on to the quarters occupied by Mr. Paterson himself. It is needless to say that they were closely watched. Here, however, the searchings of the prowlers suddenly terminated for some reason unknown to those within. They disappeared into the gully in front of the main house, and did not again come into view. Mr. Paterson and Jack, who had moved about as the movements of the Indians required it, relaxed their vigilance, and dismissed the bodyguard of three, who were near at hand in case of attack, contenting themselves with sending word to the sentinels of what had happened, and renewing the hope that nothing would be allowed to escape their observation.

"It seems to be a preconcerted plan of attack beyond a doubt," said Mr. Paterson, "and we may thank God that measures of protection were taken in time. Why do you think they disappeared before completing the survey?"

"It seems to me, sir," replied Jack, "that they suddenly concluded that the stillness and darkness within were suspicious, and that, as our rescue of the Eskimos would show, we were on guard against any attempt to attack."

"Very likely," assented Mr. Paterson. "I shall go to bed and leave you in full charge. It is hardly likely that anything further will be done by them to-night, and it may be just as well for me to take a rest, in view of what may take place in the course of the next few days. I have about made up my mind to resign my position here at the earliest convenient oppor-

tunity, as I find that since the death of my dear wife I have run down greatly both in body and mind. Linda, too, poor girl, should not longer be kept shut up in this arctic prison. Unless the Company is desirous of replacing me by some other officer, I shall recommend you to their favourable consideration."

"Thank you, sir. You are very kind," almost gasped Jack at the prospect of Linda's leaving Fort Hope, and of his remaining there to be for ever separated from the object of his love. However, he made no further remark upon the subject, rightly concluding that there was plenty of time in which to prepare some way out of the difficulty. The coming of the ship was a long way off yet, and no one could tell what might happen in the interim.

Mr. Paterson went to bed, but could not sleep. His nervous system was giving way under the strain of the upheaval threatening the post. No longer possessing the strength and energy of youth, he found himself unable to bear up against the anxiety pressing upon him, nor could he conceal from his daughter the threatening collapse of his health. Every moment she thought of his well-being, and by night as well as by day sought to lighten the cares of his position both by her love and solicitude and by her fortitude in the presence of impending danger. From her room to his was but a step, the hall-way intervening. As she lay in bed thinking over all that had happened, and all that might happen, a deep-drawn sigh startled her out of her reverie.

"Is that you, papa?" she cried in half-alarm.

"Yes, my daughter," came the low-spoken response. Without further inquiry Linda slipped on her dressing-gown, and went into her father's room. The lamp was turned low, and a dim light fell upon his pale face, looking so careworn and sad.

"O papa, why do you seem so ill?" she asked, sitting down by the bedside, and taking his hand in hers. "Is it mother?" A convulsive shudder shook her father's frame, but no response came from his lips. The weight of the world's sorrow and disappointment lay heavy in the air of the room as father and daughter wept silently while thinking of the dear one that was gone. Mr. Paterson was the first to recover himself.

"Come Linda, child; we must dry our tears. It will not do. We must be brave. Now go to your bed, like a dear child, and sleep well, and you will feel better in the morning."

Linda rose without a word and kissed her father good-night. She felt the necessity and force of his words, and to hear him speak thus lifted not a little of the heavy load from her heart.

Chapter XXXIII.

AN ANXIOUS TIME.

JACK was awaking from his morning's rest, and was beginning to think about something to eat, when there was a knock at his door.

"Who's there?" exclaimed Jack, half sitting up in bed and looking towards the door.

"Mowat, sir," replied the half-breed.

"Oh, that's you, Mowat, is it? Come in. What's the latest? Anything new?" inquired Jack.

"Frizzy, the little Eskimo that you used to laugh at, has come in, and says the Indians are all over on the north side, and that they are getting ready to make an attack."

"On the north side, eh? That's why the two rascals went to the south then. How does Frizzy know that they are going to attack us in real earnest?"

"He nearly fell into their hands coming across the river, and if it hadn't been by the chance of good luck he would be dead and scalped, or else tied to a stake before this. He crossed the river from the west, you see, sir, about dawn, and as he didn't know anything about the attack, he was thinking of the light at the fort. He knew the river well enough, but couldn't see any

lights, and he began to think he was too far south. He walked on for half an hour, until daylight came, when he saw the fort on his right, and a camp of Nauscopees down in the valley on his left, where he would have been in five minutes more. He thought it strange, and the truth dawned on him as he saw that the village was empty. By his description everything was or is in shape for their departure. I think they'll move in to-night and attack us."

"What had we better do?" asked Jack.

"Send out our scouts, sir. If we know they're comin' the battle's half over."

"Is everything in good shape about the fort?"

"Everything is all right, as far as we can make it all right, sir. The Eskimos are not doin' badly. But I don't think we could stand a very long siege."

"Why is that?" asked Jack apprehensively.

"Well, you see, sir, it ain't easy to keep a lot of people cooped up here without exercise, and keep them well," said the half-breed.

"I shall leave the scouts to you, Mowat, and see that nothing is wanting for the protection of the fort."

As Jack gave these directions, M'Diarmid came in hastily to say that there was an Indian messenger at the gate who wanted to see Mr. Paterson.

"Did they let him in?" exclaimed Mowat, interrupting.

"Yes. He's in the courtyard," answered M'Diarmid.

"Too bad! too bad!" said Mowat, shaking his head.

"That's what he came for."

"Keep him where he is then, men, so that he shan't see too much," remarked Jack.

The Nauscopee spy was a wretched specimen of humanity, and if taken prisoner would be no loss to the fighting strength of the attacking band. He was about five feet high, and of very irregular build, being hunchbacked and bowlegged. His hair was long, black, straight, and matted. His mouth was the very shrine of deceit, and it was surmounted by a nose of corresponding significance. But the crowning part of his countenance, in meaning, if not in position, was his eyes—black, sharp, piercing beads of hatred and vengeance. As Mowat strode into the courtyard he took in the full meaning of the crouching, ill-formed figure at a glance. Immediately that Mowat appeared the quick eye of the hunchback told him it was necessary to dissemble, and he withdrew like a snail into his shell. The altered circumstance, however, could not deceive the half-breed, who walked up to him and addressed him in Nauscopee. "What does Black Heart want with the master?" asked Mowat.

"Tigerface sees that the fort is closed against him, and he asks why," said the hunchback.

"Tell Tigerface if he wants to talk to us to come here in person. Get back quickly and tell him so," saying which, Mowat pointed to the gate.

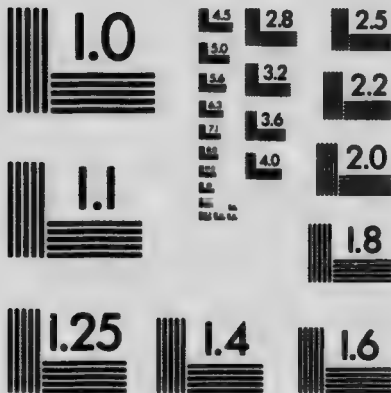
Without saying more, the hunchback folded his bit of blanket more tightly around him, and walked through the gate held open for him by two Eskimos.

Mowat stepped to one side and looked through a loop-



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hole after him, but the hunchback continued on his way without once looking back.

"Let no one else in," said Mowat sternly to the men at the gate, "till word has been sent to the master. You wretch knows just how and where we are now. It is bad; but don't let it occur again."

The rest of the day was spent in looking carefully at the defences, and in expectation of the coming of Tig face; but as evening closed in and he had not arrived, it was apparent that the spy had gained his end, and that there was danger ahead.

Towards midnight the watchful garrison descried a number of forms gliding quickly over the space intervening between the rising ground on the north near the river and the fort. Everybody was on the alert, and all were instructed to keep quiet. The different officers of the defenders—namely, Jack Ralston, Mowat, Morrison and M'Diarmid—were in their respective places. The dark forms drew nearer. It was evidently their intention to attack the main portion of the fort immediately in the rear of the master's house. They came on very quickly as they neared the gate. The attention of those at the gate was strained to the utmost, and others throughout the fortifications were awaiting news of the attack, and requests for assistance. Suddenly there was a succession of sharp reports in front of Mr. Paterson's house, at the main entrance facing the river. The attack on the west gate was a ruse to attract the attention of the garrison while a small band climbed up the

embankment and made a direct and determined assault on the master's house. But Jack, who was resolved that nothing should go amiss for want of care in the performance of his duty, was on the watch, and saw them just as they reached the rising ground in front of the house, and not waiting for any further manifestations of hostility, he began firing his express, and with such deadly effect that, seeing three of their number already fallen, the remainder of the attacking party disappeared as suddenly as they had come into view.

"Well, what is it, Mowat?" asked Jack, looking up as the tall half-breed reached his side.

"I heard the shots, and came."

"Yes. But they are gone—"

Loud cries and the sound of rifle-shots startled both at these words, whereupon Mowat hastened back to the gate in time to find that the Indians were likely to succeed in forcing it. Two of the most agile had already climbed up the gate-posts, and were about to jump down into the courtyard below. Mowat's rifle was immediately raised, and ere the reports had died away the two red men had fallen dead into the space which they had hoped to reach alive. The attack ceased as suddenly as it began. It was evident that it had been badly planned and badly executed, for the retreating Indians were met by the others coming up, and both retired out of range. It often happens in this way, in Indian warfare, that plans of attack miscarry, as Indian custom recognizes complete freedom on the part of the members of the war-party to fight when

and where they see fit. This undisciplined style of making war had saved the garrison from a nasty experience, and moreover showed them where they were weak—namely in communication when assistance was needed; for the plan of concentration was found to depend on the first alarm, and left no means of answering the second. That it may be said, was no fault of Jack's, but rather of the untrained forces at his command.

An examination of two dead Indians at the gate confirmed the reports of a general outbreak, since the faces of the two braves were covered with war-paint put on in the most fantastic and terrifying manner. A consultation was at once held to decide upon the ways and means of improving communication within the fort. Mr. Paterson, Jack, and Mowat formed the council of war. After talking the matter over, there was no room left for doubt that the centre of authority and the bulk of the reserve force must be stationed in the middle of the whole area requiring defence. This would have left the walls inadequately manned; but this difficulty was got rid of by reducing the number of the reserves to a few effective fighting men, tried courage and marksmanship. As before, Mowat was in charge of the forces, under Jack. The latter, however, was by no means satisfied at the end of the deliberations of the council of war that the plans of defence could be carried out with the precision supposed and that would have been possible under different conditions. Imbued with this feeling of apprehension, he awaited the next attack with unusual anxiety.

For two days the renewed assault was expected and waited for, but did not come. On the third day, however, about three o'clock in the morning, the whole post was aroused by the fierce war-whoops of the besiegers, who, having crept up unobserved until they were within a bow-shot of the palisade, were descried just as they rose to scale the wall. Finding themselves discovered, they rushed on to the attack, animated by an apparent determination to overcome the garrison without delay. The sudden attack and rapid movements of the Indians somewhat nonplussed the defenders. The most determined attack was made on the master's house, and it was only by the most heroic exertions on the part of Jack and Davis the blacksmith that the savages were held at bay till reinforcements arrived. The door had given way before a rush of several Indians, who, with triumphant and fiendish yells, leaped in, expecting, no doubt, an easy conquest. But they had reckoned without their host; for, using his rifle as a club in his left hand, Jack drew his revolver, and disputed the passage so successfully that the attack suddenly ceased from that quarter, to be renewed again at the north side. Meanwhile, Davis, who had gone to call assistance, returned just in time to see, or rather to hear, Jack struggling with a half-visible foe upon the sitting-room floor. Stooping down to lend his aid in extricating his master from what he took to be a perilous position, he received a blow that sent him flying across the room against the wall. Though severely shaken up by the blow and subsequent fall, Davis made a great effort to rise and call for help; but just as he

arose there was a rush of many feet, and five men entered, one of them carrying a lighted lantern. Mowat took in the situation at a glance. Jack and Eagle-feather lay writhing upon the floor, locked in the embrace of desperation. No sound escaped their lips except the ugh! ugh! of hard breathing and exertion combined. Twisting his sinewy arms between the arms of Eagle-feather and his body, Mowat gave a sudden wrench that parted the wrestlers and secured the Indian as in a vice. Eagle-feather's eyes rolled in a perfect glare of anger, but he uttered no sound, and gave no indication of his discomfiture. Jack stood up and shook himself together.

"He's a tough customer, Mowat," he remarked, as he looked down at the prostrate form of the Indian. "I had almost thought that I had got hold of Nanoak himself. Bind him, men, and put him in the lock-house under a strong guard. If he attempts to escape, shoot him."

As the men proceeded to put the order into execution, Jack was about to give some further directions as to Eagle-feather's disposal, when the shouts of the Eskimos in the courtyard warned him that his presence was needed in that quarter.

"Keep him here, Mowat, and guard this house with all care. Keep Davis and the Eskimos."

With these parting words Jack rushed out into the yard. The whiteness of the snow made it like noonday in contrast with the darkness within. Several Indians had gained entrance to the fort, and were engaged in a fierce battle with the Eskimos. It was a stubborn contest, but

the Eskimos seemed to be embarrassed by their clothing, and were getting the worst of it, when Jack cried in a loud and commanding voice, "Forward! Drive them back against the lock-house!" and then, turning towards the eastern end, he ordered Morrison and his men to come at once to their help. Encouraged by the command of their leader, and hearing the call for reinforcements, the brave Eskimos drove their assailants back step by step, and would unquestionably, in a moment more, have put them in a position from which there was no escape, when their chief gave a signal of retreat, and the band darted off in the direction of the gate. Calling upon the new arrivals under Morrison to follow him, Jack rushed in pursuit; but it was of no avail, for the agile savages scaled the low wall in a trice, and were soon out of sight behind the snow-bank on the ridge. Lying at the foot of the wall was the body of poor M'Diarmid, who had been left in charge of the Eskimos as guard over this gate. He had been surprised and killed, his men being driven back, as we have seen. His scalp, however, was not missing, since, no doubt, the baldness of the top of his head had rendered the process of scalping profitless. Delaying but a moment to look at the remains of the brave and simple-hearted Scotsman, and placing a few men on guard, under one of the Eskimos, while Morrison was sent to the eastern front, Jack hurried back to the main house, to find, however, that all was well there, and that the capture of Eagle-feather had, in conjunction with the stout resistance of Mowat and Davis, disheartened the attacking party, who

had, no doubt, fled as the others had done, to renew their hostilities at another time. Mr. Paterson and Jack were alarmed at the vigour and partial success of the assault; and this, with the death of poor M'Diarmid and the loss of three Eskimos, cast a pall of silence and gloom over the defenders.

"Call in Mowat," said Mr. Paterson, with some of his old energy.

Jack found the half-breed inspecting the end of the oil storehouse, where it looked very much as if an unsuccessful attempt had been made to burn it. Mowat followed him in, but said nothing. He was evidently in deep thought.

"This is not going to do, Mowat?" remarked Mr. Paterson interrogatively, as the former appeared at the door with Jack Ralston.

"No, sir. If they had all come at once they would have got in. I do not think we can defend the whole fort if they come together."

Mr. Paterson did not look up at the half-breed's reply, but kept strumming the arm of his chair with his fingers, as if in a state of perplexity and irritation.

"If you do not mind a suggestion from me," said Jack, "I think we could do something to mitigate the force of their next attack; and now, since Eagle-feather lies in the lock-house, it might not be a bad idea."

"Speak on, Jack. We are in need of good suggestions just now. It is no time to delay," said Mr. Paterson.

"How would it do, then," said Jack, "if you let me

lead a skirmishing attack on the Indian camp? It's the last thing they would think of, and might impress them with our boldness and determination."

"I do not think it a very safe idea," observed Mr. Paterson; "for if you and your little party were cut off, what should we do here? It is not a soldier's idea to divide his forces."

"No," said Jack, "I agree with you; but fighting Indians is not fighting in the open, sir. If a wood-party didn't divide they would be useless."

"Give me your idea, Mowat," said Mr. Paterson, turning to the half-breed.

"It seems to me, sir," said Mowat respectfully, "that if an attack is not made upon them soon they will get in. Indian jealousy is at the bottom of it, or they would have come on us in a swarm before. Tigerface does not like Eagle-feather. He is too brave, and seems to be a bigger chief. But since we have him in the lock-house, Tigerface will have it all his own way, and will rule the young bloods with a strong hand. I think I see in it all the cunning of the old man. He can take the fort when he likes, he thinks. He lets Eagle-feather advance without help, and he fails. Eagle-feather, too, is a Muskegon, and although his squaw is a Nauscopee, Tigerface thinks it would be popular to have all for the Nauscopees, and give the Muskegons what they like. They will fight now."

Mowat kept fidgeting his cap from one hand to the other during this long speech, for it was a long one for him, and his whole manner indicated the high state of

excitement under which he laboured in view of the probability of a more determined attack than hitherto, as well as by reason of the lack of system in the defence of the fort. He knew that Jack Ralston had the same idea, for they often talked it over together, and, like the latter, he was afraid of the cunning of the old chief, assisted as he was by the knowledge and boldness of the treacherous wolf-hunter.

Mr. Paterson's head sank upon his breast again in deep thought, when, with a gesture of impatience, he arose and beckoned Jack to follow him into his private room.

"Don't you think, Jack, that this is a very unsafe proposal?" he asked, as he closed the door. "We seem to be successful so far, and if they should attack the fort while you are away, the goods of the Company would be entirely at their mercy, and I should be considered guilty of misfeasance of office."

"No, sir," replied Jack boldly; "I am not thinking of the Company's goods. Linda is in frightful peril, and we must do all we can to discourage the treacherous natives before hunger drives them to desperation."

"That's just it," exclaimed Mr. Paterson triumphantly, "when they get hungry they will surrender."

"You must remember Nanoak, sir," added Jack warningly. "It is a matter of life and death with him. That wretched coward will not stay his villainous hand now. It is too late."

"Very well," said Mr. Paterson at last. "It is again

my own opinion; but you and Mowat, who is usually a sure guide, must be listened to."

"Then you give me permission to take out the party?" exclaimed Jack delightedly.

"Yes. But you must leave Mowat in charge while you are gone."

Mr. Paterson turned to look at some papers upon his desk, while Jack glided out of the room. Excepting that he himself had to remain in the fort, Mowat was highly pleased at the prospect of Tigerface's being taught a lesson. The next thing was to prepare.

"Mowat," said Jack, after carefully thinking the matter over, "the master is wrong. I must have you with me. I shall go and ask him to take charge of the fort himself. There is Mr. Coleridge to help. He doesn't know much about fighting, it is true, but he'll do to carry orders."

Jack acted at once upon this resolution, and went back to interview Mr. Paterson, who was finally persuaded to let the half-breed go.

"The master agrees with me, Mowat," said Jack, a smile of satisfaction lighting up his face, "and you are to go."

"Thank you, sir," was all Mowat said, and then they fell to discussing their arrangements.

"How many Indians are there?" asked Jack.

"I can't say exactly; but if they are all here, there ought to be at least sixty warriors. Yet, if there are sixty, I cannot see why they have not all been upon us before this," replied the half-breed, "unless it is that Eagle-feather and the old chief have fallen out, as I

thought before. You can't tell what these red devils are up to. You know Eagle-feather and Nanoak—"

"Confound him!" cried Jack fiercely. "What were you going to say?"

"That they make a bad pair," said Mowat.

"Yes, indeed they do, but I do not believe that God will permit them to wreak their vengeance upon our people. Come now; let us see how we shall make up the party. There is the young Eskimo hunter."

"A dead shot, sir."

"Yes, Mowat; and would we had more like him!" said Jack.

"We have," said the half-breed enthusiastically. "There are the three brothers from Whale River, who came just before we closed the gates."

"Good!" exclaimed Jack, his eye brightening as he began to think of the probabilities of victory, and saving her for whom he would so gladly give his life.

"That makes, with Morrison, seven of us already. Five more, and we have completed the number allowed by the master."

Mowat scratched his head, and devoted a minute or two to deep thought.

"That is all the really good ones I know of, sir, unless you risk the blacksmith and the fishermen," said he.

"No; I should prefer a small force and a good one to a large force and a poor one. Let it remain at seven, and I depend upon you to see them properly fitted out and instructed. What time shall we start?"

"It will be dark enough at four, sir."

"Very well; I shall think our best plan over between now and then. There must be no such word as 'fail.'"

Jack added these words with a feeling of misgiving, which had suddenly come over him, he knew not why. However, deeming it to be nothing more than the usual nervousness a man feels when he has the lives and property of others depending upon him, he soon shook it off, and actually began to whistle—a sign of forced courage which caused him to laugh, and so to finally dissipate all trace of fear.

Walking over to the lock-house he found Eagle-feather, bound hand and foot, lying in a corner upon a heap of straw. He spoke to him, but the Indian pretended not to hear. After taking a look about, and noting that it might be better to put an extra bar over the window on the inside and a firmer staple in the door, Jack went back to the house and completed his own preparations. A short time before leaving Montreal, he had been given a heavy bull-dog revolver—one of Colt's pattern—by a friend. It was one of the things his heart desired most at the time; but, having spent a deal of money in his preparations, he did not feel that it would be right to ask his father for an article which he could do without. This had proved itself to be all he had hoped for, and he stuck it in his belt with renewed satisfaction.

At the appointed hour, Mowat, Morrison, and four Eskimos presented themselves at the courtyard door for

Jack's inspection. Calling Mowat to one side, he engaged him in conversation for a moment, and then, turning to the others, said, "Be cautious till we get to the edge of the hill of snow behind which our enemies are camped, and then shoot straight and be brave. It is useless to shoot unless you can kill, and, no matter what happens, we must not run. A bold fight is the best service we can do those in the fort. A handsome reward awaits those who do well, from the master." This was repeated by Tiktoo, a young hunter, to the other Eskimos; and then, at the word of command from Mowat, the little band marched across the yard and filed out at the gate.

The hour had been well chosen. The Indians, having returned from hunting and their search for food, were engaged in preparing and consuming their daily meal. In accordance with Indian manners and customs, Tigerface's braves ate heartily when food came within their reach. Their motto, especially amidst the privation and hardship which they were experiencing, seemed to be, "Make hay while the sun shines." As a consequence, and because no sentinels or scouts were put out, which is in further accord with Indian custom, the approach of the little band of skirmishers was unnoticed. Mowat led the way. He crept on all fours to the top of the hill, while the others waited below for a signal. To Jack's great joy, Mowat, on taking a rapid survey of the Indian camp, backed down a little from the crest of the hill, and made a sign to the effect that the time was opportune. Jack gave the word, and the little band advanced once more. On

approaching the hill-top he arranged his men in a long line, which would give the Indians the impression that a larger force was attacking them than really was.

All was at length ready. Indians were scattered about in various parts of their camping-place, waiting for the fires to burn up; for, unlike the Eskimos, they do not eat their food raw. It was quite evident that they had not long returned from hunting. Waiting for a favourable opportunity, when each man should have a pretty certain mark for his bullet, Jack at last gave the word. Bang! bang! Two Indians fell, and the consternation of the remainder was supreme. But they had so quickly vanished from their exposed positions that a second chance to complete the work of the first did not present itself. They could be heard calling across the camp to each other, however, in the still air, and Jack waited anxiously for further developments. But no sign of any movement on their part relieved his embarrassment, and he was fain to ask Mowat what he thought of the plan of moving farther down with a view of attacking. But Mowat wisely shook his head at this somewhat rash proposal.

"They are waiting for us," he replied. "If they could get us to leave this position and expose ourselves, they would make short work of us."

"But they will not give us another chance here, and I think they are thoroughly frightened. At any rate, I'm going round on this side with the hope of getting a shot—perhaps at Nanoak, who knows?" and Jack's face was clouded with rage at the thought of the white man's perfidy.

Presently a shot rang out, and one of the Eskimos fell dead, having been shot through the head. In a moment of forgetfulness probably, he had exposed his head to the view of the savages, and had paid the penalty. This decided Jack to remain where he was. They could ill afford to lose even one of their number, and the death of the Eskimo was a blow to the buoyant hopes of the attacking party.

In the midst of this state of mingled perplexity and chagrin, they were startled by a shot from the fort, the report of which echoed strangely across the snow, like the sharp crack of ice yielding to the frost. Jack and Mowat exchanged glances. There could be but one meaning to that sound. The fort was being attacked in the rear. The order to return was at once given, and the little band, less by one member than at starting, ran across the snow in the direction of the fort. Just as they came within hailing distance of the gate, a number of Indians came running round the corner of the palisade, with the manifest intention of cutting them off. It was a moment of extreme peril, but the Eskimos lost neither steadiness nor courage; and although the meeting of the opposing forces seemed imminent, no sound of despair escaped them. "Prepare to fire!" cried Jack. "Fire!" And the word had scarce died upon his lips when the Indians received a severe check. By the time they had recovered from their set-back, Jack and his men were safely within the gate, which was at once securely barred. A succession of demoniacal yells without expressed the anger and dis-

appointment of the red men, who made one or two futile efforts to force the gate, and then moved off.

"You came just in time," exclaimed Mr. Paterson, taking Jack by the hand. "There was no one worth mentioning to defend that gate when you came. They have grown very desperate, haven't they? Dear me! I never thought that the peaceful-looking Nauscopees would turn out to be such savage and ungrateful people. It shows that we cannot be too careful."

Jack listened to Mr. Paterson's remarks in quiet amazement, but he was glad that the commandant was at last waking up to the danger that threatened them. After satisfying himself that the sentries were properly posted, and that the Indians had been driven off for at least a time, Jack went into the master's house and met Linda. The poor girl, though sorely put about by the excitement in and about the fort, showed, however, no trace of fear, and by her apparently calm and courageous demeanour inspired Jack with renewed courage and a firm determination to defend her from violence.

A new supply of ammunition was handed out to the men, who likewise began to feel encouraged at the partial success of the sortie and subsequent brush with the Indians.

About sunrise on the following morning a solitary savage was espied coming across the snow towards the northern gate. A report of his approach was brought to Jack, who immediately sent for Mowat, whose assistance was invaluable in all negotiations with the red men, and

whose proficiency in interpreting was an absolute necessity.

Mowat climbed up to the gate-top and looked over. Catching sight of him, the Indian at once began to deliver his message. His appearance, as viewed through one of the numerous cracks, was unprepossessing in the extreme, and Jack mentally resolved that so villainous a face should never be credited with bringing an honest message.

"Tigerface wishes peace," said Mowat, leaning back so that he could converse with Jack. "He is tired of the war, and says that he repents of having listened to the schemes of Eagle-feather."

"What does he propose to do?" asked Jack.

"He proposes to ask forgiveness, and then to go away."

"What does he expect to become of Eagle-feather?" said Jack.

"Eagle-feather is at the bottom of the trouble, and should be punished," interpreted Mowat again.

"Wait a bit, till I see Mr. Paterson. Keep talking to him, and find out what you can in the meantime."

Jack presented the request of Tigerface to the commandant, who was very glad of the opportunity of restoring peace.

"Tell the messenger to tell Tigerface to come and see me. I will accept his apology, and we shall be friends again," said he to Jack, who returned to the gate and delivered the message.

Upon hearing the happy issue, the Indian turned about and went back to camp.

"I don't like this business, Mr. Ralston," said Mowat, shaking his head. "If Tigerface comes with braves, the master had better not let him in. Remember Pontiac."

"You ought to know more about them than anybody, Mowat, and I shall tell the master what you say. I think myself that we cannot be too careful. But what can we do about it? It is impossible to continue in this state of siege all winter. The Eskimos must return to their village, and the hunting is being completely ruined."

In the course of an hour or so after the departure of the Indian from the gate, the old chief of the Nauscopees appeared on the hilltop with a bodyguard of braves. Mr. Paterson was notified, and Mowat was chosen to conduct the negotiations, as well as to act as interpreter, whilst Mr. Paterson and Jack stood by and thought the conversation over. One thing was decided upon, and that was that if Tigerface entered the enclosure he was to do so alone.

The motley group drew up before the entrance, the cunning old chief at the head. Mowat again took his station at the top of the gate, ready to convey the questions and answers to and fro.

"Where is the master?" asked Tigerface.

"He is within," answered Mowat quietly.

"Why do you not open the gate for Tigerface to see him? It is not the fault of the old warriors, but of the young braves, led away by Eagle-feather, that the peace has been broken. I wish to see the chief of the palefaces."

"You may see him," promptly replied the interpreter,

"if you enter this gate alone. Your braves must go back to yonder hill before you enter, though, and they must stay there."

The old chief looked very sheepish, and put on quite an injured air.

"Does the master think Tigerface speaks with a black heart?"

"You surely don't pretend that a man of peace goes round with a body of warriors in times of peace."

"No; he does not," said Tigerface. "But these are not warriors now. They know that Tigerface is a chief, and have come with him to treat."

"Do you wish to see the master?" asked Mowat haughtily.

"Yes."

"Then send away your braves, and come alone," said Mowat.

The old chief spoke a word or two to his bodyguard, which thereupon retired to the crest of the hill. When they had reached the top, the gate was opened, and Tigerface entered. The gate was then shut.

It was an odd situation, and would have been ludicrous if it had not been serious. Tigerface went forward and offered his hand in token of amity, after the fashion of the white man. Being face to face with the master of the fort he spoke in English. He knew a little from trading at the fort, and from his intercourse with occasional white men; but it was of a very ragged and unintelligible kind.—in fact, would have been quite unintelligible had it not

been for his gesticulations and the thoroughly well understood character of the negotiations.

"Tigerface, I am ashamed of you," said Mr. Paterson sternly. "The Company has always treated you well, and now why should you wish to turn against the Company?"

Tigerface looked abashed for a moment or two, and then his face assumed its old-time expression of mixed meekness and cunning.

"The Eagle-feather led my young men astray, and my old men could not hold them back," said he, with the tone of a man aggrieved and abused.

"But what has Eagle-feather to do with the present attack on the fort? When Mr. Ralston took him prisoner, why did that not end the conspiracy?" asked Mr. Paterson.

"The flight of the duckling is according to the wind. The wind too strong—will settle in a day or two."

"You haven't said anything about the white wolf-hunter."

As Mr. Paterson said this, the chief forgot his part and looked startled. But in a moment more his countenance was calm again.

"Wolf-hunter has gone his way to hunt the wolf again," said he.

"Did he not suggest to you that you should attack the fort and get possession of the 'trade' in it and the furs?"

"No. Him gone," said the chief. His glance fell to the ground, and his tone became that of a man thoroughly mystified.

"Look at me, Tigerface. Look me straight in the face," said Mr. Paterson energetically. "Do you deny that the wolf-hunter told you how much you would gain by capturing the fort?"

"Not to Tigerface. Him not listen to words against the white chief. White chief used Tigerface well always."

Mr. Paterson knew, of course, from what Mowat had heard, that this was false. It was plain that the Indian did not intend to tell the truth. He withdrew for a moment to one side, and spoke with Jack and Mowat, leaving Tigerface standing alone.

"Well," said Mr. Paterson, returning, "you will have to give us hostages for your good behaviour before we will open the gates again, and then not more than two Indians shall ever be permitted to come inside the walls at one time again. The rest must camp by the flat rock and wait till the others return."

"The master speaks pleasantly to the ears of Tigerface. The young men have not hunted this winter, and have no food for their squaws and children, and if they go back they will starve."

Here was a perplexing situation for the three councillors of war. What the chief said was no doubt true, and yet to furnish food might be only giving munitions of war to an enemy. Then again, on the other hand, if they seemed likely to starve, the Indians might attack the fort simply to get food for their families and themselves. Thus the whole question arose again.

"Send me five of your young married men—four Nau-

scopes and one Muskegon," said Mr. Paterson. "I will keep them for the winter. Remove your camp to the flat rock, and come in to trade two at a time."

Tigerface saw that Mr. Paterson meant what he said. "I will go and do," said he.

Without further ceremony, the chief rejoined his bodyguard, and went away over the hill. Mowat still shook his head with misgiving. The master had not been severe enough, yet the hostages might keep them in check.

"The Eskimos are not to go back to their village, then?" said Mowat.

"I don't know what the master thinks about that," replied Jack; "but I believe he intends them to return as soon as the hostages come in."

"What good is it," said Mowat pertinently, "to take hostages when you give them too? Tigerface will seize the Eskimos."

"I didn't think of that," exclaimed Jack, turning round quickly and following Mr. Paterson into his house. He told him what Mowat had said.

"It is likely," assented Mr. Paterson; "but what are we to do? We can't stay locked up like this all winter. It is impossible."

Not wishing to argue the question when he himself had no solution of the difficulty to offer, Jack withdrew and left everything just as the master had ordered.

About twelve o'clock another body of Indians came over the hill in single file. It was Tigerface and the five hostages. The latter were about the most miserable-looking

specimens of the Indian race that could be found anywhere. Jack and Mowat would have felt like laughing, if it had not been for the seriousness of the situation. They drew up before the entrance, and Mr. Paterson was again summoned. Jack would take no responsibility unless at the especial request of Mr. Paterson, who seemed, moreover, to have forgotten his old cares in the new ones, at any rate for the moment. The commandant came out and viewed the prisoners. Strange to say, Tigerface did not once mention the name of Eagle-feather, nor was he taken into consideration. The old chief was only too glad to leave him where he was. The hostages were handed over and made prisoners, Mowat putting the thongs upon their wrists himself to make certain. As they disappeared within the gate, under charge of Mowat and Morrison, Mr. Paterson gave Tigerface a plug of tobacco, and bade him go, and told him to remember that the terms of the peace must be strictly carried out. The old chief viewed the tobacco as a veritable gift from heaven.

"The master thinks the trouble is over, sir," said Mowat, when they had bolted the prisoners in. "But I believe it has only begun. Where is the wolf-hunter?"

"I think you speak truly," replied Jack. "We must not give up our close watch and readiness to resist an attack. I am by no means satisfied."

The hostages meanwhile kept strict silence. Sambo watched and listened out of curiosity, but he said, "Dey spoke nuffin de whole time."

On the following day Jack went up to the top of the

hill to see if Tigerface was removing his camp to the region of the flat rock, as agreed. As he expected, no steps had been taken towards removal, although the camp had a deserted look. He more than half made up his mind to go down himself into the camp, since it was no longer supposed to be hostile, and see what was to be seen. He was well-armed, having his rifle and long knife and pistol, as usual; but something warned him not to be over-bold, and not to rely upon the word of an Indian. As he wandered back to the fort he found it difficult to realize that it was practically in a state of siege, so quiet and peaceful did everything appear. Mowat came out of the gate to meet him and give him a message from the master. As Jack walked into Mr. Paterson's apartment his ear was greeted with the merry laugh of Linda.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed; "she is in no wise cast down. Let it be a lesson to the rest of us to keep up hope and courage in the midst of difficulties."

"How thoroughly papa has recovered his health and spirits!" said Linda, addressing the young clerk, as he appeared at the door of the room in which father and daughter were sitting. "Don't you think so, Jack?"

"Yes, Linda, I do; and Providence has been gracious to us," he replied.

"What is your idea of the situation at present, Jack?" asked Mr. Paterson quietly, taking up the thread of conversation.

"Do you intend to send the Huskies back to their village, sir?"

"I was thinking of doing so, now that Tigerface has given hostages," answered Mr. Paterson reflectively.

"Mowat thinks that that would be a great mistake."

"Why?"

"Because he says that we will be where we were before they gave us hostages, if we give them hostages too, and in such large numbers."

Jack paused to see how the half-breed's idea struck Mr. Paterson.

"But they have promised to leave the village and go home," said the master.

"They haven't done it yet, sir. I have just looked over the hill into the village, and though there were but a few Indians there, the lodges were still all standing."

Mr. Paterson was very much taken aback at this, and sent Jack out to call Mowat in.

"Is there a man in the fort whom we can send out to the village to ascertain why Tigerface has not left it?" asked Mr. Paterson peremptorily.

"I will go, sir," replied the half-breed quietly.

"But we cannot spare you. I mean some one whose loss will not place us in a desperate situation. What of Emack?"

Mowat looked surprised.

"I beg your pardon, master, for sayin' so, but the Indians would kill Emack or any other Eskimo on sight," said he.

"But if they do—"

Mr. Paterson was about to refer to the fact of the

Indians having given hostages for their good behaviour, when it occurred to him that he could hardly order the hostages to be shot—at any rate, with a clear conscience—if so great an indignity was put upon the Indians as that of having an Eskimo ambassador sent to spy out their delinquencies and to demand a fulfilment of the terms of the treaty. He paused, and as he wore a puzzled look, Jack ventured a suggestion.

"Will you let me go, Mr. Paterson? I am not afraid."

Mr. Paterson looked admiringly at the speaker for this new proof of courage and devotion.

"It might perhaps be a good thing, Jack, for all concerned if you could bring matters to a successful ending," said he; and then, having passed the whole affair rapidly through his mind, he determined to accept the offer. "Very well, Jack; I accept your offer as mediator. Choose your own time, and make your own plans."

Jack and Mowat left the master and walked towards the former's quarters.

"I am sorry, Mowat, that I cut in after you had offered to go," said Jack, putting his hand in an affectionate way upon the half-breed's shoulder, "but I saw that the master wanted to keep you alongside. You see, he could spare me, but not you."

Mowat was not insensible of the compliment, for it was manifest that it was as Jack had said, yet he felt that he was a far better man for negotiations of such a character as those about to take place than his young friend.

"You will not go without your revolver?" said the half-breed.

"Why, you surprise me!" exclaimed Jack, in amazement. "I thought you would have been the very one to have advised me to go unarmed."

"Not while the white man is there," replied Mowat significantly.

"What! Nanoak?"

"He will do you harm the first chance he gets, sir. Be sure of that," continued the half-breed.

"That is possible," said Jack. "A traitor such as he might be anxious to carry his vengeance to the bitter end. However, beyond putting it in my breast-pocket, I will carry nothing. A bold front impresses these people."

Mowat was too respectful towards his superior officer to make any further suggestion, but his usually imperturbable countenance could not conceal the fact that he had a very serious feeling of misgiving.

The day was unusually bright for a winter day in the sub-arctics, and when Jack sallied forth he felt quite cheery over the prospects of his undertaking. The Eskimos eyed him with respect as he started off, and Mowat, who was standing outside the gate, where he could have the last word, called out, half under his breath,—

"Shoot him, Mr. Ralston!"

"What?" cried Jack, turning sharply round.

"Shoot him, sir, or he will kill you."

The half-breed's words lingered in Jack's ears as he gradually ascended the snow-clad ridge.

The camp of Tigerface lay beneath, not empty and listless, as it had been in the morning, but full of bustle and activity. This presently gave way to complete silence, as Jack walked over the crest of the ridge and boldly down towards the camp. As he neared it he fully expected that some one would come out and meet him ; but no one appeared.

"Tigerface !" he cried peremptorily at last, as he caught sight of a brave crossing from one tent to another.

The Indian looked at him, murmured the chief's name in Nauscopee, and beckoned him to follow. As they went through the disordered and slovenly groups of tents, scowls of recognition were cast at him on all sides, but there was no sign of a desire to molest him. Jack put on a haughty and defiant air, as one who had not come as a suppliant.

"Ugh !" exclaimed Tigerface, as Jack stopped at last before the old chief's tent. "What want ?"

"I have come from the master of the fort to know why you have not kept your word and agreement with him to move your camping-place to the flat rock, and finally to go on your usual hunt, instead of remaining here in this threatening way."

"The young chief like the white fox, but he too hard on Indian. Nauscopee wait for deer. He starve," answered the old chief.

"It doesn't matter," said Jack firmly, "what you choose to think about it. You gave hostages for your good behaviour, and you promised to go."

Tigerface dropped his eyes and seemed abashed.

"Will master give Indian deer-meat?" he asked, looking up again.

"That is not the question," replied Jack. "You promised to go, and you haven't gone. Are you going or not?"

A cynical smile crossed the copper-coloured features of the old chap, who looked about him at his assembled braves with the air of one who has the game in his own hand and wishes to play it for his best advantage.

For a moment or two a wild desire rushed through Jack's brain to demand that Nanoak be delivered up for punishment.

"Where are all your warriors?" he asked boldly.

"Some gone hunt," grunted the old chief.

"Why haven't they all gone hunting?"

Tigerface looked inclined to resent this close inquiry into his affairs by the young man, but thought better, and lapsed into quietude.

"Don't know," he replied at length, as Jack continued waiting for an answer.

"I am commissioned by the master, and that means by the Honourable Company of which I am an officer," said Jack, in a clear and grandiloquent style, intended to impress Tigerface with the importance of the proceedings, "to say that unless you move to the flat rock before the wild dog yonder [pointing to the northern stars] goes down into the wood—"

His words were interrupted by a sudden commotion

outside the tent. A brother of one of the Indians killed in the late sortie from the fort was caught in the act of entering the tent for the purpose of taking revenge upon Jack for the death of his brother. A scuffle ensued, and the intending assassin was taken away. Tigerface was very angry—or pretended to be—and insisted on trial and punishment, although it looked to Jack like a ruse to gain time. But by way of compensation he became more amenable to Jack's stipulations.

"Where is the wolf-hunter?" asked Jack, resuming.

"Gone hunt," said Tigerface.

"He must be given up a prisoner for the part he has taken in this conspiracy against the lives and property of the people of the fort."

Jack was well aware that he had now played his weakest card, and that he was more than likely to suffer for it, although it was to his mind a necessary step and one that had to be taken sooner or later.

Chapter XXXIV.

REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE.

ABOUT a quarter of an hour after Jack's disappearance over the hilltop on his mission of peace or war, a small band of hunters came down the river, and turning the promontory that conceals the upper part of the river, came into full view of the fort, their dogs galloping at a lively pace. At first Mowat did not recognize them, although he knew they must be friends, but as they came closer he saw what they were—hunters and trappers from the south-east, coming north in quest of the silver and the black fox. The hunters were wholly unaware of the precarious condition of things at the fort, and drove up to the gate as visitors usually did, without any suspicion that the lives of the inhabitants hung by a thread. But notice of their arrival had been already conveyed to Mr. Paterson, who gave orders that they should be admitted without ceremony, whilst he put on his great-coat preparatory to greeting them.

"You don't know how glad we are to see you," said he, shaking the leader's hand heartily. "We are besieged by all the worst of the Indians in this part of Labrador, and,

but for your timely arrival, might suffer defeat and perhaps more dreadful misfortunes."

It may be as well to give the reader some idea of the appearance of these hardy sons of the snow-bound waste before proceeding farther with the recital of the incidents of their meeting with the master of the post.

The chief of the trappers was a tall, finely-built man of about fifty-five, the first tinge of gray showing itself on his temples, although the lines of labour and fatigue would have prompted an observer to look up from a face of such a weather-beaten description to a head of iron-gray if not of quite white hair. His voice was harsh and unpleasant, but withal of a frank and manly tone, and such a one as to inspire confidence in the nature and capability of the speaker. He was clothed, as all trappers are, in buckskin, whilst the cap that hung by his side, where it was somewhat nervously manipulated by his left hand, was of black foxskin. The customary knife was stuck in his girdle, and his rifle, never out of his sight, stood in the corner near at hand. His massive jaw and sharp, clear eye gave additional "character" to his appearance, and very plainly indicated that he was a man not to be trifled with.

The others of the party were strong, athletic men, and, with one exception, younger by several years. The exception was a famous guide, long since past threescore, but still full of life and energy, and ready to hunt the bear and the wolf, or trap the fox, as in days of yore. His perfect acquaintance with the whole of the vast extent of territory known by the name of Labrador made him an invaluable addition

to any party. For the past year or two he had been following his vocation in the region lying between Rigollette and Davis Inlet, but hearing of the intended journey to the north across country of Joe Daniel and his party of trappers and hunters, he made known his desire to go, and was welcomed with open arms. They had started with no less than seventy-eight dogs, but on their arrival at Fort Hope this number had been diminished by eleven, from fatigue, madness, and injuries, leaving still, however, an ample number for the purposes of the chase.

The trading-posts are to these men what the oases of the desert are to travellers of the sandy waste, and their delight in reaching one after a long and severe journey in quest of fur and game is only equalled by the hospitality of the officers and servants of the Company, who extend to them, as guests and trading customers, and, in fact, to all who need it as well, a hearty and sincere welcome.

Although these men had been accustomed more to the dangers of the chase than to conflict with the Indians, they nevertheless had occasional encounters with thieving Nauscopees, and besides were thoroughly well acquainted with the nature and disposition of what is known as the "bad Indian." In fact, they had very little respect for any sort of an Indian, since they looked upon all as spoilers of their fortune, and the only obstacles in their pathway to riches.

It was with no small degree of satisfaction, therefore, that the trappers heard that there would likely be an opportunity of ridding the world, and more especially their

portion of it, of their trade rivals and enemies. Word was carried to the men of the post that nothing was to be left undone for the comfort of the new arrivals; and already, while Mr. Paterson was chatting with the chief trapper, the others were being made welcome in the main quarters of the men. Extra logs were thrown into the fire-place, and mighty sparks flew from the chimney-top in the freshening breeze far away over the landscape, leaving here and there on the snow-covered roofs and upon the broad expanse of snow round about little feather-like mementos of the welcome to the trappers whom fortune had directed at the right moment to betake themselves to the post upon the Ungava. Barking and impatient dogs, unhitched and placed in security, were calling for food. Comatics were stowed away, and at last the work of preparing for a stay was finished, and the stalwart followers of Joe Daniel were invited to enter the dining-hall for dinner, where the sight that met their gaze was such as to gladden the hearts of any men. Sambo had done his best, and had justified his reputation for "being able to get up a meal out of nothing in no time." An enormous platter of broiled venison blocked one end of the table, while the odour of deer-meat and cranberry jelly filled the room. For fear the venison might not be enough, several partridge and ptarmigan stood on a side table ready to fill the vacancy. Here and there were plates containing large slabs of bread, and in order to show the guests there was no "hard feeling" about it all, pots of preserves and piles of cakes dotted the snow-

white board. Disputing with the other delicious odours for possession of the trappers' noses was the scent of steaming coffee, "the meat, drink, and pudding" of the northern hunter.

Under what may be called these decidedly propitious circumstances, or favourable auspices, if the phrase suits better, we shall leave them for the present, and return to the master's house. Daniel was listening to Mr. Paterson's account of Jack's departure for the camp of Tigerface, having enjoyed a substantial meal, and having produced his pipe at his host's request.

"How long ago might that be?" asked he, with some concern.

"Not above an hour since," replied Mr. Paterson.

Joe gave one or two earnest pulls at his "bull-dog," and ended with a grunt of surprise.

"D'ye think no harm will come to the lad?"

"They hardly dare," said Mr. Paterson energetically. "We have hostages for their good behaviour. He has merely gone to see why they have not gone upon the hunt, as they said they would, after removing their place of encampment to the flat rock over yonder on the left of the foot-hill, although he ought to have returned by now."

"You don't know the cunning of these devils, sir. They may hold him as a hostage, an' it would be like them."

It was now Mr. Paterson's turn to be surprised. "I never once thought of that," said he, "nor did Mowat. At any rate, he had to go. There was need of settling the difficulty, and my daughter's safety must be looked at."

Old Joe again devoted himself to his pipe while his brain revolved about an idea.

"If you like, Master Paterson, me and my men will go out and lick 'em all before dark, and that's not till long."

"Thank you, Daniel. Your hunter's heart spoke then, and if Jack Ralston is not back by half an hour I shall be glad to accept your offer. Hark! hark! I hear firing," cried Mr. Paterson, starting up in consternation. But before the words were well out of his mouth, Joe Daniel and his men, with Mowat as guide, were rushing across the courtyard to the entrance gate.

Chapter XXXV.

AN IMPORTANT CAPTURE.

WE left Jack Ralston endeavouring, according to his own ideas of diplomacy, to make the wily and treacherous old chief keep his promise. He had kept up for some time a fusillade of reproaches upon the old man's head. The warriors without and within listened, but for the most part in sullen silence, to the young man's words; and yet, had there been any prospect of an advance of rations to make up for the time and food already wasted, there is no doubt that so far as they were concerned they would have been quite willing to give up the attempt on the fort. It is possible, therefore, that, falling upon the ears of unsuccessful and hungry braves, the words of Jack Ralston might have had some effect, had not his reference to the wolf-hunter been heard by Nanoak himself, who strode into the tent without further waiting, pushing the Indians standing in his way to one side without ceremony.

"What would you have of me?" he exclaimed in a voice of passion, his broad chest heaving with his deep and quickly-drawn breaths. "You have insulted me on every occasion. You have held the Nauscopees too long from

their natural rights." He paused for a moment to calm his extreme agitation.

Jack was amazed at the man's hypocrisy in referring to the natural rights of the Indians, when he himself belonged to the class that had endeavoured to supplant the Indians altogether, while the Company only sought to encourage them 'n their natural occupation, and, in general, to cultivate energy in hunting and trapping. It was manifest, however, that he was not ashamed of his conduct, and intended to encourage his new allies in their treacherous revolt.

"You have acted in a way unworthy of a white man, and have brought ruin on the Indians," exclaimed Jack fearlessly.

"I will stand by them till Tigerface and his braves have possession of that fort," cried Nanoak, pointing in the direction of the post.

Applause greeted this determined language, and the Indians began to move restlessly about. Jack was pretty certain that no harm would come to him unless ordered by the old chief, and he kept his eye steadily upon him to detect the slightest sign, intending to draw his revolver and retreat as expeditiously as possible.

"Very well," continued Jack defiantly, "I came to tell Tigerface what he might expect, and to ask him, for the last time, if he intends to do as he has promised to do." And then, darting a sudden look of scorn at Nanoak, he cried, "I did not come here to deal with renegade white men."

No sooner were these words out of Jack's mouth than

the wolf-hunter sprang at him. But Jack, anticipating this movement, and being something of a boxer, stepped dexterously to one side, striking his opponent on the side of the head with his clinched fist. The wolf-hunter was slightly overbalanced by the blow, but in a trice his powerful frame had recovered its equilibrium. To shoot him meant to rouse the Indians and certain death, and Jack instantly made up his mind that as in the midst of a hostile crowd there was no possibility of his getting fair play, it would not be cowardly, but merely wise, to beat a hasty retreat. Suiting the action to the thought, he flew out of the tent-door, and was on his way to the fort before the Indians were aware of his purpose; but the few who had their snowshoes on darted in pursuit, and being fleet of foot, began to gain upon him. As Jack ascended the incline and felt himself almost within reach of the fort, he paused to look behind him, and was astonished to find that not more than thirty or forty yards separated him from a number of pursuers. As he ran rapidly down the other side, across the snow, he fancied that he could hear the hard breathing of the Indians close behind. Disdaining longer to flee, he drew his revolver from his breast and turned round at bay. A yell of triumph from the Indians who fancied that Jack was exhausted, greeted this sign of fatigue; but as two shots in quick succession wounded two of their number, the others, being armed with knives only, turned and fled out of range.

It was at this moment that, hearing the shots, the trappers grasped their rifles and ran in the direction of the

firing. They reached the gate just as Jack's enemies attained the summit of the hill in retreat, Jack himself standing as he stood at the moment of firing his revolver. Old Ned, the guide, was the first of the hunters to take in the situation, and in another instant he had sent a bullet amongst the retreating Nauscopees. Despite the yell of defiance as they disappeared, it was certain that the shot had told; and well content with the outcome, Jack turned to thank his intending rescuers. Expecting to find Mowat or Morrison and some of the Eskimos, what was his surprise, therefore, to find a band of strangers coming towards him clad in the well-known garb of the hunter, and looking as if they had been selected, by their build and general fitness, especially to assist the occupants of the post in their trying defence of their lives and property. On drawing nearer he espied one he knew.

"Ned, the guide," he exclaimed, "as I live! You heard about us all up here, I suppose, and generously came to our aid."

"No, Mr. Ralston," replied the guide, shaking Jack's hand heartily, "I came with Joe Daniel here—"

"What! the famous trapper? I am proud to meet you," and Jack seized the old trapper's hand in so warm an embrace that they were friends from that moment. "Surely it wasn't accident that brought so fine a body of men opportunely to the assistance of the post?" said Jack.

"Either accident, or Providence, or fur," said old Ned good-humouredly, as they re-entered the gate, where Mr. Paterson awaited them.

"So I came safe and sound out of it after all, sir," said Jack, as Mr. Paterson greeted him.

"You did Jack, and it was a narrow squeak, too. Had it not been for these—"

"Not by a long chalk, Master Paterson," said John Daniel, with his peculiar drawl. "He had the miserable critters licked when we got there. They was flyin' over the hilltop like the devil's chickens. Old Ned here he can't keep quiet when there's anything to shoot, so what does he do but pepper one of 'em and salt him, too, or I'm mistaken, and the old hunter gave a loud guffaw at his own joke.

"Still, for all that," interposed Jack, "I was a glad man when I saw the post's new defenders. I tell you, when a man thinks of the master's daughter and those red—"

Jack stopped speaking as his eyes caught sight of Linda who, impatient at his delay in coming in, had come out to meet him.

"O Jack!" she said, as she blushing advanced before the hunters to shake hands with him, "I was so afraid you'd never come back."

"Were you, Linda?" and Jack's eyes glistened with tender expression as he held her delicate hand in his. The situation was very embarrassing, and Mr. Paterson, observing their evident longing to see each other alone, bade Linda take Jack in and see that he was well fed.

"Those wretched Nauscopees nearly deprived me of my trusted officer, Mr. Daniel," said Mr. Paterson, turning to the trapper. "It was unwise of him to go, but he was bent upon it, and I did not like to keep him from it."

"He's a brave fellow that, Master Paterson, and good enough for any man's daughter, if I may be so bold as to say it; but, as you know, I am a plain man, and don't understand always how to mind my own business."

"Don't apologize," replied Mr. Paterson warmly. "It never comes amiss to say a thing that ought to be said. I am too grateful for your coming at this time of peril to look narrowly into the ways of ceremony. I think, now that the rascals have seen that we have help, they will likely make off. When Mr. Ralston is ready to relate his experiences, I should be glad if you would come in and give me your advice."

"I will that, Master Paterson; and if there's any way of winding up the trail of these devils, I am in it, and I think we'll find 'em at the other end."

After giving a few directions respecting the closing of the gates and the entertainment of the trappers, and making a tour of inspection, Mr. Paterson went over to his own quarters.

"Ha! Jack," said he as he entered the room, "and has Linda known how to feed a hungry man? She has, has she? I thought she would. Then tell me what you learned of this unfortunate rising. But stay. I wish to call Joe Daniel in to hear it. His advice may be of service."

When the trapper arrived, Jack began his story. Joe Daniel listened very attentively throughout.

"A close call," said he, as Jack came to the finish. "What made 'em do it?"

"The prospect of plunder," said Mr. Paterson, interposing.

"No, master," said the trapper; "there is more in than that. Them fellers must have been egged on by Nanoak; and then comes the question, What egged him on?"

"That cannot be defined with certainty," replied Mr. Paterson.

"It may not be defined with certainty," said old Joe, "but I'll bet a black against a red that the wolf-hunter will be in hot water before he gets inside this 'ere fort."

In response to the questioning look of his auditors, he continued,—

"You see, I know Nanoak's way with the Indians afore this. He ain't a lover of Tigerface, nor no more of any other face with red on it. He's a Huskie. What brought him to leave the Huskies and take up with the Injuns? That's the question."

"What bearing has it on the case, Daniel?" asked Mr. Paterson, after a pause.

"Because," said the old hunter, tilting his chair back and assuming a look of wisdom, "sooner or later they'll go back to hard pan, and then there'll be a row. The Injuns hate Nanoak. I know. I heerd about the wrastlin'. If he don't deliver the goods afore long, you may bet your boots, Master Paterson, there'll be more to pay than he reckons for."

"I see what you mean! I see what you mean!" exclaimed Mr. Paterson. "That suggestion may have far

reaching effects. If we can come to terms with the Indians, they might hand over Nanoak for punishment, and the outbreak would cease at once."

"Exactly," said the trapper; "an' more'n that. It would be an easy way of settlin' a question that would hardly come to the surface again."

"True," said Mr. Paterson reflectively. "Could we do anything with Eagle-feather, do you think?"

"What! him that's lyin' in the lock-house?" said Joe in astonishment. "Leave him there, master. One chief is enough to settle with. Keep him close. There's more of the wolverine about him than the eagle. I'm thinkin' that after the late pepperin' them fellers will come to terms. Let me and my men try a hand at treaty: ' and I think we can fetch 'em."

"I should be very glad indeed if you could bring about a peace and restoration of trade, and I should not hesitate to give a proper requital," said Mr. Paterson.

"Well done, master. I'm your man. Me and Ned can do the trick," said the trapper.

"Remember that they must hand over the wolf-hunter," continued Mr. Paterson.

"Ay, that I shall," and old Joe went after his men.

"It will be interesting to see how they come out," said Jack, who now spoke for the first time.

"I should like to have you with them," said Mr. Paterson; "I forgot that. I will see Daniel before he goes."

Mr. Paterson accordingly went out to find the old

hunter, who said that he would be only too happy to have the brave young clerk with him.

On the following morning the little band of trappers, headed by Joe Daniel and Ned the guide, together with Jack Ralston, took their way through the gate, and disappeared over the hill leading to the Indian camp. They walked quickly, their rifles slung over their shoulders, but in such a position that they could be instantly unslung.

"I'm thinkin' Tigerface will think somethin's goin' to happen when he sees Joe Daniel and his scouts lookin' in on him for an early mornin' call," said old Ned, breaking the silence. "What think ye, lad?"

"I hope he will," replied Jack; "and it will do him good, if he takes it to heart."

"I'd like to shoot every one of 'em, if it was me," said Joe Daniel, joining in the conversation. "But the master wants a treaty. Who ever heerd of treatyin' with Injuns, and that old Catface in particular? It's a reg'lar waste of time. They seem to be all there, the way they're flittin' about from one tent to another."

The old hunter was shading his eyes from the glare of the sun on the snow, and inspecting the camp with a searching look.

"What do you intend doing with them if they offer resistance?" asked Jack.

"Shoot 'em, of course; what else?" laughed old Ned.

"No, none of your deer-stalking methods here, boys," interposed the leader. "Them's not my instructions."

"But what supposin' the wolf-hunter shows fight?" asked old Ned.

"Then leave him to me. Now, won't you, Mr. Daniel?"

The tone of Jack's voice was so beseeching and serious that Joe Daniel looked round at him.

"D'ye apprehend anything of that sort?" said he.

"I do; and I don't mind saying that. Well, if it comes to that, we can't help it."

"No, I s'pose not; only it mustn't come to that," observed the leader sententiously. "You're young, Mr. Ralston, and, like me when I was young, hot-headed; but you'll get cooler by-and-by."

"Yes; that may be," Jack confessed. "But if you knew what Nanoak meant by this attack, you wouldn't give him an hour to live."

"What was it?" asked the old hunter sharply.

"He wants to carry off Miss Paterson," said Jack.

"What!" exclaimed Daniel; "him marry that gal! Not much cheek in that, ain't there? Well, well! Mark my words: he'll never do it. But what's the use in talkin'? It'll all be settled in another five minutes."

As the party drew near the camp conversation ceased. In accordance with Indian custom, no one appeared to greet the newcomers till old Ned called out in Nauscopee, at his leader's bidding, for Tigerface, wherever he was, to come forth. The old chief appeared, in answer to the summons, at his tent-door, and waited for them to come up.

"Tell him what we've come for, Ned," said Joe Daniel. Whereupon the guide addressed the Indian in his own

tongue. The address was long enough to suit the taste of the trapper, but apparently not clear enough for the understanding of the old chief, who merely shook his head in a puzzled way in reply.

"Look here, you old buzzard. None of that," said or rather shouted Joe Daniel. "We ain't come here to be fooled by any of your games."

"Not understand," said Tigerface.

"You're lyin' now. You do understand. I can understand it myself."

This remark produced a smile amongst the trappers, seeing which old Tigerface grew affable, and made a sign to the trappers to sit down.

"No, we're not sittin' just now," said old Joe, interpreting readily the sign. "We're come here on business."

As the remainder of the conversation was conducted half in Nauscopee and half in English, we shall give it all a liberal translation, preserving, as best we can, the spirit of it. Joe Daniel shot an inquiring look at the old chief, but there was no indication of the latter's intention to afford an opening either for negotiation or argument, and the trapper had to begin the explanation of his coming.

"You see here, Tigerface, a force of the finest and bravest men this side of the Whale River. We have come here for to know what you mean by coopin' up the inhabitants of this yere fort as if they was a lot of chickens. I tell you it a' i't right, and we ain't agoin' to stand it. Are you goin' to make peace, or are you not, and that soon? That's what we want to know."

He paused, and looked the old chief full in the face. Whether it was the address or the reputation of the trappers themselves that inclined him to speak, we know not, but the old chief at once assumed a cowed and cunning look, and began a reply.

"It is more than a moon since the paleface went to the help of the enemies of the Nauscopee. Great wrongs have been done to our people, and our warriors want satisfaction. We did not go to war because of hating the good chief. He has been just and good. But he sent his braves to fight for the Eskimos, and we must fight them because they defend our enemies."

"Umph!" ejaculated the trapper as the chief finished; "you make up a fine story for a redskin. I may tell you right here to your face that we ain't agoin' to let you nor no other man ill-treat the Huskies. They're good friends and neighbours, and it ain't right. They never did you no wrong. You're only tryin' to get up a quarrel. You've got to make peace, and be quick about it, and git out of this and begin huntin' again, or you'll be crawlin' round askin' for food and ammunition again before another one of your blamed moons. Look here, Tigerface; are you goin' to make it up or not?"

"What does the young chief say?" asked Tigerface, turning to Jack, who had kept in the background.

"Joe Daniel has spoken, and spoken truly. I speak his words over again," replied Jack, wisely refraining from giving the old fellow a loophole for further conversation and delay.

"You see, Tigerface," resumed the trapper, "I'm a plenipotentiary extr'ordinary, and no mistake. You do as I say, or suffer the consequences and effects."

The old chief hung his head and ruminated upon the bold words of the trapper.

"Give us flour and meat and we will go," said he.

"You will!" exclaimed Joe; "but you're gettin' accommodatin' in your old age. Anything else you want?"

"Blankets," said Tigerface solemnly.

This was too much for old Joe, and he began to laugh heartily.

"You're too literal by a good deal," said he; "we ain't come bringin' bread, but brickbats. You'll have to make up your mind to move out on less than that. Come now. We ain't got much time. When are you goin'?"

"Where?" asked Tigerface, looking up in a half-surprised way.

"Where? I don't care where. But it must be out of this. It's when, you should have said, not where."

This fine turn of the conversation was too difficult for Tigerface, who relapsed into a state of imbecility.

"Where's the wolf-hunter?" asked Joe at length, getting tired waiting for further developments.

"Don't know," said Tigerface sullenly.

"Well, he's our prisoner."

"What!" cried the wolf-hunter in a voice of thunder.

He had come up unexpectedly and in time to hear the fatal words of the trapper. All the fierce nature of the man was concentrated in that one savage exclamation.

"I've bin instructed by the boss to fetch you in a prisoner," said the trapper, turning towards the wolf-hunter, and speaking with a certain calm insolence of tone.

"You have, have you?" and here Nanoak broke into a volley of oaths.

"It ain't no good swearin', Nanoak," said the trapper.

"Come, chief; I wish to speak with you," said Nanoak, becoming quieter, and beckoning to Tigerface. The latter took the hint, and made a step in the direction of the wolf-hunter.

"Stop," said old Joe, laying his hand heavily on the chief's shoulder. "Do you go, or do you stay? If you stay, you are my prisoner too."

"Do you fear the worn dog?" said Nanoak sneeringly, and looking at the chief with contempt.

Seeing that a crisis was approaching, Jack whispered something in the trapper's ear, whereupon he exclaimed,—

"I arrest ye both. Hands up, or down ye go."

As he raised his pistol, Nanoak jumped forward and grasped the barrel. He wrenched it from the trapper's fingers, and turning suddenly, attempted to hit Jack Ralston over the head with it. Everything was now in confusion. Jack drew his revolver, but was afraid to fire, lest he should kill one of his own men. Though he had succeeded in avoiding the swinging blow directed at his head by the wolf-hunter, it was impossible to avoid the encounter which the latter was precipitating, and the two were soon locked in deadly combat. Jack was no match

for Nanoak in strength, but by dint of his youth and quickness he was able to postpone the wind-up till the hunters got a firm hold of Nanoak's wrists and ankles when the wolf-hunter was fain to relax his grip.

"You have forfeited all chance of consideration," shouted Jack, getting up and straightening his jerkin that had been pushed up round his neck.—"I command you, men, to bind him tight, and march him a prisoner to the fort."

"Yes," said old Joe; "down to the fort with him."

"Don't you think I'd better cover the retreat," suggested Ned, casting a glance at the Indians.

"No," said Jack, overhearing the remark; "we'll bring Tigerface too," at which he grasped the old Indian by the arm and joined the procession to the fort. Ever and anon they looked back to see if the Indians were resenting their strong measures; but, whatever they might have thought the Nauscopees made no sign of molesting the Company's officers.

The inhabitants of the fort were much surprised to see the expedition returning with two such important personages as Nanoak and Tigerface prisoners of war. The capture of the chiefs of the rebels without bloodshed astonished everybody, and none more than Mr. Paterson. Linda stood by the curtains of her bedroom window as they crossed the courtyard to the lock-house, and she was greatly relieved to see those who had lately been threatening the very existence of the fort and its occupants now in the safe custody of those who formed her only means of protection. Girls who have not been situated

similarly in places remote from help and civilization can scarcely appreciate her feelings, for women amongst lawless men have a thousand times more to dread than men have, nor have they been endowed by nature with corresponding means of protection.

A runner had lately arrived at the fort, and being an old servant of the Company he had quickly guessed from "signs and wonders" apparent to the initiated, as he came over the intervening country, that something was wrong. He had picked up by the way sufficient information to be able to inform the master that the rebellion was on the decline, and only needed a firm hand and a decisive blow to finish it.

Nanoak, Tigerface, and Eagle-feather were now all safely housed in the lock-house, and the minds of the master and his officers were relieved somewhat of the long suspense to which they had been subjected. Not within the memory of any one at the fort had there been a trial for a serious offence, and Mr. Paterson withdrew to consult his statutes, in order to see exactly what the extent of his powers as officer and magistrate were. It might be that he should have to inflict the death-penalty, and so grave a probability renewed the seriousness of the situation. No man, especially one of Mr. Paterson's sensitive and kindly disposition, cares to deprive another of life without a perfectly sufficient cause, and even then it requires a good deal of nerve to give the word that dooms a man to see the rise and set of sun no more.

Chapter XXXVI.

THE TRIAL OF THE REBELS.

THE next morning Mr. Paterson announced that he was prepared to try the prisoners for their lives. On investigation he had found that the Indians and Nanoak were not mere prisoners of war, entitled to liberation on the termination of hostilities, but that they were to be regarded as freebooters and common robbers, and as such punishable with death. Moreover, he had found that the master of the post was the sole and only judge and jury. However, if he should see fit, it was open to the master or officer in charge to keep the prisoners in confinement until an expected superior officer might arrive; but if, on inquiry from his inferior officers or from his men, he found that the weight of information was against such a postponement, as dangerous to the interests of the people at the post, and to the well-being of the Company's property, he was bound as a wise and prudent officer to order the immediate trial of the offenders, and to dispose of them as the law allowed.

The morning was clear and calm. The utmost care and diligence had been employed in watching over the prisoners and the palisade during the preceding night, so

that nothing of a regrettable nature disturbed the security of the post. An attack by the Indians in an attempt to rescue Tigerface and Eagle-feather had been confidently expected, and the trappers and Jack, with the emergency force of the post, stood about within easy reach of their arms. Mowat had taken, at Jack's request, the watch over the prisoners, and it was quite manifest to his watchful and practised eye that they expected a rescue, and the morning had found them a dejected, disappointed, and sullen lot of men. This was more the case with the Indians than with Nanoak, who seemed to take things in his usual calm, self-reliant way, although none but one well versed in the ways and manners of the red men would have noticed the least concern on their part. It can be easily understood that the arrest of the leaders of the rebellion left the misguided Nauscopees and Muskegons in a poor condition for continuing the war.

It is the custom of men entrusted with large responsibilities in high offices to make the means of carrying out the requirements of justice formal and precise. It is but a step from the informal to the slipshod, and nothing could be worse and less impressive upon the public, especially the Indian public, mind than a careless system of dispensing justice. In accordance with this feeling, upon an important subject and upon a most important occasion, Mr. Paterson ordered the men's dining-room to be turned into a court of justice. Mr. Coleridge, being somewhat conversant with the proper way of going about it, was entrusted with the carrying out of the order. First of all,

the tables and benches were removed and placed in the shed at the side. Then a large picture of the imperial coat-of-arms was placed, over a table-desk, at one end of the room. Two old muskets, useless except for decorative purposes, were put in the form of an "X" below the coat-of-arms. To the right was a box or rather series of bars within which the three prisoners were to stand. In order to give to the tribunal the appearance of a public one, in which, as in the ordinary courts of justice, the public is admitted to see that fair-play is meted out to the prisoners, a notice was posted upon the outside of the entrance-door to the effect that, "Know all men by these presents that Wehtingo, otherwise known as Tigerface, chief of the nation of Nauscopee Indians; Tobigo, otherwise known as Eagle-feather, chief; and Nanoak, otherwise known as the wolf-hunter, will this day be tried by the master of this post for inciting Indians and others to the plunder and destruction of Fort Hope, and to the murder or serious injury of its officers, inmates, and occupants, contrary to the peace of our sovereign lady the Queen, her crown and dignity, and in violation of the statute in that behalf. This is to certify that all male persons of the age of twenty-one years, not on duty, may attend the said trial. —(Sgd.) CHARLES PATERSON, *Senior Officer in Charge.*"

Soon a curious group of Eskimos, chiefly women and children, following the example of two or three white men not on duty, ranged themselves about this notice; but none of the former could read, and being dependent on the white men for its interpretation they held their peace.

hoping to catch a word or two of explanation. The whites, however, were too discreet to make remarks, and the Huskies were fain to depart as curious as they came.

At twelve o'clock, noon, as official notices usually read, Mr. Paterson, attended by Jack, who was armed to the teeth and looked very formidable indeed, entered the court-room and took his seat. Mowat entered from the opposite door, and going up to the desk got his instructions to bring in the prisoners. Presently the stillness was broken by the sound of many feet walking through the room leading from the lock-house, and then the door opened and the three prisoners filed in, preceded by Mowat, who turned frequently to see that all was well. Following the prisoners were Joe Daniel and his band of trappers, and a striking-looking group they were. They escorted the prisoners into the "box," and as they drew up before the railing the malignant looks of the latter prepared Mr. Paterson for a more serious view of their case. Tigerface was as usual quiet and smooth, but Eagle-feather was stolid and sullen, while Nanoak was openly defiant. Jack stood with his arm resting on Mr. Paterson's desk, and acted as a sort of crown counsel and court messenger combined. It was a strange, wild scene.

"Read the charge, Mr. Ralston," said Mr. Paterson, "upon which these prisoners are to be tried."

Jack read the charge, and laid the paper down.

"What have you to say in your defence, Tigerface?"

The old chief started as he heard his name, and looked up with a half smile of mingled cunning and hate, but

dropped it to an expression of cringing cowardice as he read or fancied he read the meaning of the stern look in Mr. Paterson's eyes. He began in a whining tone a sort of excuse or explanation of his conduct, as if it had all been due to a mistake; and that now, since he had found out that Mr. Paterson was really well-disposed towards him, he was willing to show his great love for him and the people at the fort by making up the quarrel, and resuming his position as an industrious and faithful Nauscopee chief.

"How do you explain your attack on the Eskimos?" asked Mr. Paterson as the chief finished.

"Bad spirit he trap poor Indian," replied Tigerface.

"What has Eagle-feather to say?" and as he said this Mr. Paterson looked at the leader of the young braves.

"Eagle-feather can die. He no coward," answered the young chief defiantly, and nothing further.

"I will now call upon Nanoak to plead to this indictment. Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Neither," answered the wolf-hunter in a deep voice of calm determination.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Mr. Paterson. "You cannot be not guilty and be guilty too."

"I say that I am neither 'guilty' nor 'not guilty'—neither one nor the other. You said that I was not a white man but an Eskimo, and what right have you to try an Eskimo for an attack upon an Eskimo?"

"None," said Mr. Paterson, slightly inclining his head; "but I am trying you for your intended attack upon this fort. What have you to say?"

"You have shown yourselves my enemy, and why should I be your friend?" retorted Nanoak so savagely that old Joe Daniel looked wickedly at him and put his hand upon the breech of his rifle.

"You are mistaken, Nanoak. We have always given you shelter, and asked your advice, and treated you as a friend," said Mr. Paterson in an injured tone.

"No; not at the games," replied Nanoak sternly.

At this juncture Jack Ralston leaned over and whispered something in Mr. Paterson's ear. It produced a startling effect upon him, and for a minute or two he was not capable of proceeding.

"I wish this matter were in the hands of a proper judge. I am incapable—"

"It is your duty, master, to sentence these villains to their just deserts, and that's death, and no mistake," cried old Joe, whereat his men stamped their feet by way of applauding him.

Jack rather resented this interruption as a slight upon Mr. Paterson; but, as a quarrel was to be avoided at all hazards, he said nothing. Mr. Paterson, however, was overawed by this unexpected demonstration. It was evident from the anxious expression of his eyes that he felt himself in a very awkward position. As for old Joe and his men, they were enraged at the leniency already shown by the master, and his evident intention of letting the prisoners down easy.

"Put that broad-bellied devil up for a target, master. Just let my men get a shot at him," old Joe put in again.

"That would not be right without a fair trial," remonstrated Mr. Paterson.

"Well, give 'em a fair trial, but be quick about it. I've too many fish to fry to spend the season in this here place," continued Joe.

"Well, well," replied Mr. Paterson hastily, no doubt somewhat alarmed at this hint of old Joe's going off. "I'll do what I can, and you can help me."

"You bet I will," said old Joe sardonically.

"Come this way, Mowat," said Mr. Paterson, indicating the place of a witness at the desk corner. "Tell what you know against these prisoners."

Mowat put down his rifle, and leaving the vicinity of the wolf-hunter went over to the desk and stood nervously awaiting further orders.

"Tell what you know against these prisoners," Mr. Paterson gently repeated.

Mowat twitched about and put his hand to his forehead, while a scowl of deep thought shadowed his eyes, which were fixed on the floor.

"You know, master, what I heard when the Nauscopees were attacking the Eskimos?" said Mowat inquiringly.

"I know. Just tell it. Mr. Ralston is taking notes of the evidence," said Mr. Paterson.

Mowat shuffled uneasily on his feet again, and then resumed his testimony.

"I lay down in the snow at the Indians' camp, and heard Nanoak explain to Tigerface and the other Indians how easy it was to plunder the post."

"You lie!" exclaimed Nanoak fiercely, his eyes flashing hate and his lips tightly compressed.

Mowat turned a look of momentary anger upon the wolf-hunter, and then continued,—

"I came across country and told you, sir; and the fort was put in shape and the Eskimos called in."

"What do you think was their object?" asked Mr. Paterson.

"To kill the people at the fort and plunder it," replied Mowat. "They have killed one—M'Diarmid."

"Is that all you know?"

"Yes, sir. You remember about Miss Linda," said Mowat.

Jack grasped his long knife convulsively. It was plain what would have happened if he had had his way.

Mr. Paterson, too, was again startled by this reference to his daughter, but it did not add to his determination to act severely with the culprits. He was not a desperate man, and it requires a little of the spirit of desperation to sentence men to death, even when they deserve it.

"Joseph Daniel, will you come forward?" said Mr. Paterson.

"That I will, and no mistake," exclaimed the trapper impatiently, as he clambered over the end of the railing and drew up alongside the table.

"I have seen these fellows, and talked with 'em over the hill, and I wouldn't give one of 'em an hour to live. Just take old Joe's word for it, master. He ain't no liar."

"And you are of the opinion that they are guilty, in

the words of the indictment which you have heard read?" said Mr. Paterson.

"You bet I do, and knows it too. Where would you have bin, master, but for me, old Ned, and the rest of us here. You would have bin lyin' a scalped corpse on the snow, and them devils fillin' up with rum inside and tearin' everything to pieces," and he laughed contemptuously.

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Mr. Paterson, in the formal manner appropriate to the work of a magistrate; but old Joe mistook it, and called out,—

"Ain't that enough? That's enough to send 'em to hell."

"Yes, yes; but then we must do things according to law," said Mr. Paterson, slightly annoyed at the freedom of the old man's speech and manner.

"John Ralston!" said Mr. Paterson, "step forward, please, and testify."

Jack gave his evidence in a clear and fearless voice, and if one were to judge by the expression of the wolf-hunter's face, Nanoak would gladly have killed him on the spot.

One or two questions were asked to clear up some of the less certain aspects of the case, after which Mr. Paterson announced that he would retire for the purpose of considering his judgment, and return in a few minutes. The hall lapsed into a state of silence. The door opened, and everybody expected to see Mr. Paterson enter and walk up to his desk. But he merely beckoned to Mowat, who glided out and shut the door behind him. After the lapse of a few minutes the door opened again, and this time Mr. Paterson walked forward to the platform.

"Silence!" cried Joe Daniel sternly. There was no need for the exclamation, but he had been in a court-room once, and was greatly impressed with this part of the constable's duty.

Mr. Paterson took up his pen, and looked over his spectacles at the prisoners.

"I find you guilty," he said, "all three; and I shall have you imprisoned till the ship comes, when I shall have you sent in irons to Montreal."

"What! not shoot 'em, master?" exclaimed old Joe. "Well, then, they'll shoot us; see if they don't."

Though sorely disappointed, and brooding over the loss of a chance to put a bullet in a rascal, old Joe fell into line, and ordered his men to escort the prisoners back to the lock-house. The guard of the stockade was inspected as usual, and everything made snug for the night. Mr. Paterson was just closing up the door leading into his quarters, when Jack Ralston came running over.

"Well, what is it, Jack?" asked Mr. Paterson.

"Tigerface wanted to speak to me privately, so I took him aside, and he says that if you let him go, he will take the Indians away, and begin hunting again," said Jack.

"Humph. What do you think of it?" said Mr. Paterson.

"I asked Mowat, and he says he thinks it would be well to let him do so, or else how are we to get the Indians away?"

"True, Jack," said Mr. Paterson. "That may be a way out of the difficulty. I will see in the morning"

Chapter XXXVII.

A TERRIBLE ENCOUNTER.

THE excitement at the fort increased rather than diminished. There was a low feeling in the air, as it were, that was neither pleasant nor reassuring. The dull sky towards evening bespoke a stormy night, such as rages in these tropics of the north only. The wind moaned and lurked about the palisade and the buildings like an angry dog. The Eskimo women began their prayers to the Good Spirit, and one could hear their soft voices united in a low, monotonous hum that seemed to chime in with the hollow sound of the wind.

"It's an uncommon bad night this here's goin' to be," remarked Joe Daniel to Jack Ralston, as the latter stopped on his way to the men's quarters.

"I am very glad you came over, Joe. I want to ask you if we hadn't better keep an extra sharp eye on the prisoners—at any rate till the trouble is settled, and all fear of a rescue is gone," and Jack leaned against the lock-house corner as he uttered these words.

"Beyond all doubt," replied old Joe emphatically. "If I'd a-thought that the master wasn't agoin' to shut the daylight from them imps of darkness, I'd have found a

way of givin' them a darby or two, and don't you forget it. Them fellows will get us into a heap of trouble yet."

"What you say is quite true, Joe," remarked Jack Ralston, "and I am a good deal of your opinion; but then you see the master is very kind-hearted, and doesn't like the idea of taking life."

"True, but I ain't used to fiddlin' with that sort, I kin tell ye," and old Joe shook his head remonstratively.

"What I wanted to speak to you about," said Jack, resuming the broken thread of the conversation, "is the keeping guard. Hadn't we better put a guard over them the whole time now, and not trust to chances? It's a difficult thing to spare men, but we must do it; and then there's another trip to the Indian encampment. This rebellion has been working up for years, and it must be settled one way or the other, or else the post might as well be abolished."

"Grantin' that, and no mistake. It'll be abolished soon enough," observed old Joe dryly.

"Very well then," said Jack. "If you will take the watch from eight to ten, Mowat will take it from ten to twelve. I will go on from midnight till two, and so on. I'll get Morrison, and perhaps he may take a watch."

"When is it ye want me? Humph! all right," and old Joe compressed his lips in the way peculiar to him when he had made up his mind what to do in case of necessity.

The depressing weather increasing, the depression of spirits amongst the members of the garrison left them at nightfall in a truly unhappy condition of mind. Jack

went into the lock-house with a lantern to see if all was right before going to his evening meal. The light fell upon four eyes gleaming in the opposite corner. He looked about for the other two, when a terrific blow on the head dashed him and the lantern to the floor, instantly extinguishing the latter. For an instant Jack was stunned by the great force of the blow; then his consciousness returned, and with it a realization of the extreme danger he was in. It was of no good to cry out. The walls were filled in with sawdust, and were as dead to sound as those of adamant. In the darkness he could hear the half-suppressed breathing of the wolf-hunter as he groped about for his intended victim. Almost immediately after there began a furious struggle, which ended in a falling to the floor, when Nanoak discovered with an oath that he had grappled with the wretched Tigerface. The chief said nothing. Evidently the fall had injured him. With another oath or two at the old chief's stupidity, Nanoak began his search again, while Jack edged silently towards the door, which was at the side of the room where he supposed Nanoak to be. It was a time of intense danger and suspense. Had Nanoak wished to escape, he might have done so, but it was evident that murder was in his heart. Jack had no hope of winning in the struggle. The wolf-hunter was too powerful for any man in Labrador to hope to fight on even terms with him at close quarters. But what of Eagle-feather? Why was not he, too, free? Twice, with almost providential fortune, did Jack escape the clutching hands of the wolf-

hunter, as he groped along the wall, or suddenly darted out into the middle of the room, when he thought he heard the sound of shuffling feet. The closeness of the room became almost overpowering. Perspiration was pouring down Jack's face and body through mingled heat and excitement. It could not go on for ever. Soon the pursuer and pursued must come together.

"Where is he?" at length exclaimed Nanoak, in a hoarse whisper. "Catface, where is he?"

There was no answer. Though the wolf-hunter disliked Eagle-feather too much on ordinary occasions to deign to ask him a question, yet he hated Jack more.

"Eagle-feather, where is he?"

"In the west!" answered the Indian.

As Jack heard these words, he would gladly have sprung upon the Muskegon and crushed him to the ground, for Nanoak would now continue the search; but it was necessary for him to keep his vengeance for another time. Baffled in his attempts to find Jack, the wolf-hunter burst into a torrent of oaths and exclamations.

"You young whelp of the west," said he. "You lied. You bore false witness. You dared to say I was not a white man. You lied to the girl, and she believed you."

These last words were uttered in a horrid tone of jealous rage. Nanoak rushed about the room in search of vengeance, stumbling and falling over men, chains, and stools, till, in a paroxysm of passion, he lay down and rested preparatory to planning and beginning anew. Jack could hear him breathing hard in the corner opposite.

"Now is my chance," he thought. "If I do not kill him, he will certainly kill me."

Grasping his knife firmly in his right hand, he crept closer and closer to the breather. He was so close to him that he could almost feel his snorting puffs. He leaned still farther forward to make sure of his distance, and then raising his hand plunged the knife savagely downward. A yell of fury told him that he had struck, but not killed. Stepping back out of the enraged demon's way, he felt the blade of the knife. It was wet with blood clean to the handle. His courage revived. The death-struggle, if such it had to be, would now be on more equal terms. There was an ominous silence for a few minutes, and then a deep groan escaped from the wolf-hunter. Jack was now alarmed, and began to feel all the pangs of having done a remorseful deed. Then for an instant the suspicion rose in his mind that it might merely be a ruse, but a second and fainter groan fully assured him that Nanoak had received a mortal wound. Changing his knife-handle to his left hand, he touched the wall, and groped along it rapidly till he came to the door. Stepping out into the darkness, he closed the door, and locked it securely behind him before considering exactly what he should do. Then he darted across the square to the master's house.

"I have wounded Nanoak severely, sir," said he, in response to the question of Mr. Paterson, who wondered at the abruptness of Jack's movements.

"Wounded him? Bless me! You did not—"

"No, sir," replied Jack, divining the finish of the ques-

tion. "He attacked me in the lock-house, and tried his best to kill me. Oh! he had it in for me all right; but I should like you to see him, sir."

"Call the men!" exclaimed Mr. Paterson, much disturbed. "Call the men at once. I will go with them. There is blood upon your hands."

Jack was not long in apprising the men, by whom we mean his ever-faithful friend Mowat and the leader of the trappers, Joe Daniel, who gave orders quietly to two more to follow them armed, for they feared treachery.

Jack then ran back for Mr. Paterson, who walked rapidly across the square to where Mowat and Joe Daniel were standing, each with a lantern.

"I have two men armed ready to fire when we open the door, if need be," said old Joe.

"It is perhaps a wiser precaution," said Mr. Paterson. As they entered the passage-way a low moan reached their ears. All looked at Jack, who could scarce repress a shudder. He advanced to the door, and undoing the fastening, boldly threw it open. The light of the upraised lanterns streamed in. It fell upon a gruesome spectacle. Nancoak lay flat upon the floor upon his back, the life-blood streaming from a wound in his neck.

"Look out for the Indians!" cried Mowat, as Mr. Paterson, with eyes riveted upon the wounded man, was about to step forward. A sweep of the lantern revealed the two chiefs against the wall at the farther corner, silent, stolid, and sullen.

"Cover 'em, men, with your rifles while we examine

the wolf-hunter, and let your eyes never leave 'em," cried Joe Daniel authoritatively. Saying this, he moved aside to let them enter, when his sharp eye fell upon the severed thongs.

"Ha! their nippers are off. On with them. I'll put them on, and if they stir, dead 'em," continued the trapper, picking up the ends of two of the thongs still hanging over their shoulders, and tying them securely.

Meanwhile, seeing the rebinding of the Indians about to be safely completed, Mr. Paterson and Jack turned their attention to the wolf-hunter, whose glassy eyes told plainly of approaching death.

"Tell Linda to fetch the brandy," cried Mr. Paterson. "He may be saved yet."

Jack darted off to do his bidding.

Joe Daniel looked up at the sound of the word "saved" as if he doubted his ears. Mr. Paterson was on his knees beside the wounded man, looking earnestly into his face.

"Shall I undo his neck, sir?" asked Mowat.

"Yes, do. The poor fellow is in the agony of death," Mr. Paterson said.

Slowly and with great care the half-breed pulled aside his buckskin tunic from the wolf-hunter's throat and cut it free at the shoulder. A mass of blood clotted into a thick paste covered the whole side of the neck. The half-breed reached over, and taking a lantern from one of the trappers, held it close to the wound. A fresh red streak forced itself through the clot and trickled lazily down the side of the neck.

"A bad wound, Mowat," said Mr. Paterson. "It is deep, too. It was a savage thrust."

"And a timely one, doubtless," exclaimed Joe Daniel, "or else I'm mistook. Here's the lady," and as he spoke, Linda, closely followed by Jack, hurried into the small room.

"Give him brandy, Linda," said Mr. Paterson, who seemed to have lost all trace of enmity towards the wounded man.

Linda pushed her way through the narrow passage between two of the men, and as her eyes fell upon the great gash in Nanoak's neck, she uttered a low cry of horror. But, by a supreme effort, she subdued her fright, and kneeling down, with trembling hands prepared to give some brandy to the wounded man. Seeing the necessity of helping her, Jack crawled forward on his hands and knees and lifted the wolf-hunter's head as gently as possible. Linda poured a few drops into a spoon, and by dint of patience succeeded in getting them into his mouth. In a minute or two she gave him a few drops more, when, heaving a deep, low-drawn sigh, Nanoak opened his eyes more widely, and showed a glimmer of consciousness.

"You are severely wounded, Nanoak," said Linda gently, as his gaze lingered upon her sweet face.

He tried to mutter something in reply, and his lips quivered, but nothing more.

Linda turned to her father and asked him if Nanoak could not be moved into the house; but Mowat, who heard her, shook his head.

"He will not last long, miss," he said.

"Oh dear me! Think you so? Must he die?" and Linda clasped her hands in supplication.

"Good-bye," said Nanoak, and the unexpected exclamation of the wounded man drew all attention to him. Linda was weeping sorely. The sight of the strong man near to death stirred all her woman's nature. Mowat, too, the tenderest-hearted of men, turned away and could not hide the movement of his coat sleeve across his eyes. Mr. Paterson sat in a deeper despair even than his daughter, and was no longer able to perform his part as commander and head.

"I am going to die," Nanoak said faintly; "but I meant you no harm."

"No, no," exclaimed the girl fervently; "I am sure you did not. I forgive you freely."

The wolf-hunter seemed unable to close his eyes or change the direction of their gaze, which, fixed and almost glaring, gave a tragic seriousness to his words.

"You spurned me at the fort," continued Nanoak, speaking with great effort, "but I—loved you."

The last words, spoken with studied effort and firmness, produced a visible effect upon the assembled crowd of men, for men such as these know the mighty power and influence of love as no others know it.

Linda looked at the big man with puzzled expression. It seemed so strange to hear a hunter, in truth, an outlaw, lying in the very lap of death, talking of love in such a strange surrounding. She held his hand and gazed fixedly

at him. His eyes gradually lost their brightened expression, and sank back lifeless and dull into their sockets. His arm fell limp in her grasp, and his hand grew clammy and cold.

"He is getting cold here, papa," said Linda plaintively, and looking up at her father. "We had better move him to the house."

"Take him, Jack.—Take him, Mowat. Move him into the house," but the master's voice was hollow and meaningless.

Mowat whispered something to Jack, who leaned forward and looked closely into Nanoak's face. He reached his hand over and felt his heart.

"He is dead, Mr. Paterson," said Jack.

"Dead? Then take her away," said the master quietly. "It is time she should be gone."

Jack took Linda, who was weeping bitterly, gently by the arm and led her away.

"You go too, sir, and we will lay him out," said Mowat pleadingly.

The old man raised himself up at the word, and walked to his house.

Chapter XXXVIII.

PEACE RESTORED.

THE effect of the killing of Nanoak upon Tiger-face and Eagle-feather was such as one would naturally expect from the taking away of the instigator of the attack upon Fort Hope. Taken in conjunction with the fact that it was plain to them that they could not hope to escape and to succeed in their design, the death of the wolf-hunter meant the death of the rebellion. Scouts sent out reported the Indian war-party in dire distress, and everything pointed to a complete subjugation of the rebels. The policy of the officers towards the Indians and Eskimos has always been one of conciliation and forgiveness. It is impossible, however, to expect much from these untutored denizens of the northern wilds, who, in their manners and habits, combine strangely the strength of men and the weakness of children. Mr. Paterson was anxious that the tragic ending of the wolf-hunter should end the killing, and that peace should be restored as soon as possible. With this object in view, he called a council, consisting of Jack Ralston, Mowat, Joe Daniel, and Ned the guide. It would be uninteresting to the reader to go into all the details of the consultation. The opinions

held might be classed under two heads—one, for war, being full of distrust of the Indian; and the other for peace, hoping for the best, and considering the backbone of the rebellion broken.

Nanoak's body was buried outside the fort, near the point where the trail going to Whale River and that leading to Mushamok met. As Mr. Paterson insisted that he should not be buried like a dog, but that the burial-service should be read over him, since, whatever his faults, it was not now for them but for his Creator to judge of them, Jack Ralston, with Mowat, Joe Daniel, and two of the trappers, took the body to its last resting-place and read the service.

The longer Jack thought over the matter, the more was he of opinion that Mowat's idea of restoring Tigerface and Eagle-feather to their people was a correct one. One condition only should be exacted, and that was that the Indians should cease their strife against the Eskimos. In order not to offend Joe Daniel, and to show him that his counsels were not treated lightly, the necessity of this experiment was explained to him; and although he still adhered to his opinion on the folly of treating Indians with leniency instead of shooting them, he agreed that it was necessary to try the experiment.

Thoroughly humbled by the reverse which they had suffered, and anxious to get back to their own people, Tigerface and the young chief were only too glad to agree to the generous terms upon which they were liberated.

On the following morning they walked out of the gate free men, and in twenty-four hours not a vestige of the invading force remained in the village of the Eskimos.

It was with different feelings, however, that Mr. Paterson parted with the Eskimos. White men in everything but colour, he regarded them with affection; and when the time came for them to return to their homes, Mr. Paterson had them all drawn up in a row, and to each grown-up person something useful and valuable was given; while amongst the children sweetmeats, dog-whips, whistles, and sleds were freely distributed. Easily pleased and grateful as they are, the Huskies on this occasion manifested extreme delight at the generous treatment, this feeling being enhanced, no doubt, by the excitement of returning to their village homes.

The gates once more swung open, and a long column of chattering, stalwart men, fat, squatty women, and round, chubby children hied themselves over the hill.

"They are queer people, them Huskies," observed Joe Daniel as the last of them disappeared to view.

"A queer people, truly, Joe, but as fine and simple souls as ever came from heaven," answered Jack.

"Ay! and if there's going to heaven, it's them that'll be there, and not them confounded redskins with their thin legs and gawky gait. But we must go on too; and now that we are not wanted, we'll continue on our way," said Joe.

"Don't put it that way. The master'll be offended. Don't say that you are no longer wanted," said Jack.

"Well, I won't put it that way, but we must get on all the same.—Ned, see that the boys is ready before to-morrow's dawn, for we must be well on our way by daylight," and the old trapper lit his pipe with renewed satisfaction.

To the trappers, and more especially, of course, to old Joe himself, Mr. Paterson offered presents of both money and material; but beyond a keepsake in remembrance of Linda, not a trapper would take a thing; and it was with feelings of genuine sadness and regret that Linda and her father, together with Jack and Mowat, severed the bonds of friendship that had been so firmly woven by the kindly bearing and noble spirit of self-sacrifice of these brave and artless woodsmen.

With many a gay shout and waving of farewell, the trappers left the fort and betook themselves to their long, cold journey over wastes of snow and ice just as the dawn of day stood "tiptoe on the lofty mountain-top." Through a mist of tears, brought to her eyes by the thought of parting from these brave men, and by the sudden recollection of all that had so recently taken place, Linda watched them till they disappeared from view.

"God has been with us," she said. "How thankful we should be!"

Chapter XXXIX.

FAREWELL TO FORT HOPE.

IT is necessary for the reader once more to bridge a considerable space of time and to bring himself as best he may to the time of the annual revisit of the ship. The boom of the bow-gun proclaimed at last to all the world, and to Fort Hope in particular, that Captain Bray and his good ship *Ledic* had again arrived.

Mr. Paterson was expecting her, and with Linda had watched her as she came in sight, hove to, and fired her gun, and with his daughter hanging affectionately upon his arm he sauntered slowly down to the landing-place.

"How d'ye do?" exclaimed Captain Bray in his usual cheery way, as his ship's boat drew near enough for him to make himself heard. "Everything looks about the same."

The lack of the usual hearty response to his greeting evidently mystified him, for beyond a searching look or two, he gave no sign of continuing. As he stepped from the boat to the wharf, however, Mr. Paterson advanced, and received him cordially, whilst the soberness that had during the preceding winter succeeded the sunlight in Linda's face could not conceal the welcome which her heart wished to extend.

"We are glad indeed to see you, Captain Bray, but we have had a trying time of it since you were here last," said Mr. Paterson.

"Have you indeed?" exclaimed the veteran seaman. "Not illness, I hope; and certainly your daughter cannot have been a victim to the unkindness of fortune, for she looks as lovely and as glorious as ever."

"Ah no, not Linda, God be thanked," replied Mr. Paterson. "She has been well," and his eyes rested upon her sweet face with an expression of deep affection. "We have undergone sore trials from the outbreak of the Nauscopees, and had it not been for the arrival of a band of trappers on a tour of the hunting-grounds, I am doubtful if the courage of Jack Ralston and the sagacity of Mowat, both of whom you will remember, could have saved us. I do not think that we could possibly have escaped alive."

"You astonish me!" exclaimed Captain Bray, whose face gave ample confirmation of his words. "What could have induced an outbreak?—And what frightful peril you must have been in, my dear Miss Paterson."

"Walk with Linda, Captain Bray, while I examine this bundle of letters, for I must, if possible, return in the ship with you, my health has become so broken under the strain of the attack upon the fort. Not since the Eskimo raid has the post been in such danger, although for a different cause, thank Providence."

"I shall, Mr. Paterson, and Miss Paterson shall tell me all about it. Pray, do not think it necessary to look after

me. Your daughter will do that," and in company with Linda, Captain Bray walked towards the fort.

"Well, you shall not stay here another winter," said he as his fair companion recited her recent experiences. "It is no fit place for a girl who should have the advantages of a school in England, and at least some of the pleasures of civilized life."

"And yet, Captain Bray, I could not leave this northern solitude without a feeling of regret. The men are all so noble and so kind. Mowat, Pilo the French-Canadian, Morrison the Orkneyman, have all been as gallant and courageous as any men could be."

"I do not doubt it for one moment, my dear girl," replied Captain Bray—"I am quite aware that one will not find finer men anywhere in the world than in the Company's service; but then this life of hunting, trapping, and trading is for men and not for girls. Indeed, from what your father says, I'm sure you and he will come back with us."

"Yes, I know he ought to go, and I am willing to go; but—but it is so hard to leave home, and after all this is home to me," she replied.

Captain Bray marvelled at her irresolution, but said nothing. At this moment Mr. Paterson reappeared.

"Yes, Captain Bray, Linda and I will return with you. I shall leave the post in charge for the present, and the officer at George River will be here by Christmas."

Linda was aghast at the words "in charge." Whom could her father mean?

"I have a letter here for Ralston too. He is moved to Hudson Bay. He will accompany us."

"Oh, how happy we shall be!" But as Linda spoke these words, she leaned forward and whispered something to her father.

"Yes," said he, his voice trembling with emotion; "but it will not be for long that we shall be separated. I feel the day approaching."

"O papa!" was all that Linda could exclaim when— But we shall leave unwritten the words that would describe these sacred emotions of the heart.

The work of unloading the ship proceeded with unwonted rapidity. Bales of "trade," and boxes of fishing-tackle, guns, and ammunition were put ashore, and safely stored in their proper places within the confines of the palisade, while pelts and skins of all varieties pertaining to the region of the sub-arctics, together with almost innumerable barrels of fish, filled up the hold of the *Ledic*, and even overflowed upon the deck above. Whilst Captain Bray and Jack Ralston were superintending this work, Mr. Paterson was installing Mowat in the position of master of Fort Hope until such time as Mr. Forster, now at George River, should arrive and assume command. The men were summoned to hear the official reading of the certificate of appointment, and were asked to obey the new officer as cheerfully and as thoroughly as if he were Mr. Paterson himself. Accustomed to change of circumstances, as to that of seasons and of scene, the hardy Pilo and the rough Orkneyman, nevertheless, were moved

to tears at the approaching departure of their beloved master. Had the importance and responsibility of his new office not forbidden it, Mowat himself would have flung himself at Mr. Paterson's feet and begged to be taken too. As for Linda, nothing could console them for her departure, while Sambo refused to show himself or be comforted. To each of these Linda paid a little visit, and made a little present in remembrance of their faithfulness and love for her, and of her love for them. It is safe to say that no treasure which they possessed was so carefully put in safe-keeping as these tokens of her affection.

Almost as the last bale was put aboard, and the time was near at hand for going aboard, a solitary figure, broad and square, with a smiling countenance of the same distinguishing characteristics came into the courtyard and knocked at the back door of the officers' quarters. It was Emack, with a little present for Linda—a miniature harpoon, ivory-tipped and jointed, made of the tusks of the walrus. Besides the ivory itself, the labour expended was worth no trivial sum, and it represented the true love of an Eskimo heart for a kind mistress, for these simple people know nothing of display and affectation, and when their heart yearns they give.

"Ah! Emack," said Linda, as the tears came to her eyes, "you are too kind. May you be as happy in your married life as you deserve, and that means a great deal! If ever I come this way again, I hope to see you and your dear wife in all the comfort and happiness that you could wish for."

Bidding him wait, Linda brought forth from her ward-

robe a warm red winter jacket which she gave to Emack for his wife, and just as he was grinning one of his broadest grins in acknowledgment, and was moving off, she bethought herself of the piece of tobacco which she had especially laid away for him. It was indeed an amusing but affecting little scene, for "true hearts are more than coronets," and even rarer.

The process of the new administration for the time being having been put in complete readiness for use, and the last spark of rebellion having died away with the death of the famous wolf-hunter, the cargoes having been taken ashore and aboard, the captain and his crew returned to the ship, and Mr. Paterson, Linda, and Jack with them. The solemn stillness of the wilderness, broken by the sound of the moving vessel, recalled with tenfold intensity the sad and the happy moments of life at Fort Hope,—the gaiety of Christmas, the dreariness of winter without, and the cheeriness of it within, the trophies of a successful hunt, the perils of the sea—all in fact that goes to make up the romantic and extraordinary life of a dweller in the far north-east.

Linda awoke from her momentary dream just as the white puff left the muzzle of the gun, and the dull sound echoed among the hills—the formal farewell to Fort Hope. She waved her handkerchief again to the now distant figures of Mowat, Pilo, Morrison, and the rest of those who had come down to see them "off;" but beyond the fancy that they waved in return, there was no sign or sound of their having seen her signal.

The voyage home was stormy and unpleasant. Tempestuous seas compelled the *Ledic* to alter her course several times. At last, however, the *Nan* was met, and the transfer completed. Montreal was reached in safety.

The engagement of Jack and Linda was announced before his departure for Hudson Bay. Mr. Paterson and his daughter settled down to a life of mingled retirement and social enjoyment. Many of his old friends were still alive, and many were the pleasant evenings he and they spent together; while Linda, unremitting in her affectionate attentions, waited for Jack Ralston to return.

THE END.